AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR OF 1939-1945

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CIVIL

VOLUME II
THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE
1942-1945

AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR OF 1939-1945

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THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE

1942-1945

by

PAUL HASLUCK

CANBERRA
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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PREFACE

THE Australian kangaroo prolongs the period of gestation when the season is unpropitious, and the offspring due to be born this season may not come until the next season, not by deliberate choice of the parents but by the dispensation of Nature. A similar phenomenon may be noted in the case of this volume. Delivery was expected towards the end of 1951 but, the conditions of life surrounding the author having changed, it is taking place nearly eighteen years later.

This observation is made as a prelude to an explanation and an apology rather than as a claim to have established a world record of delayed parturition. The writing of the first volume of the political and social section of the history of Australia in the war of 1939-45 was completed by me in August 1949 and the book went to press in January 1951. As explained in the preface to that book, the work was originally planned as one volume and it was only when a substantial part of the manuscript was in the hands of the General Editor that it was decided, in May 1950, to divide it into two volumes. Some necessary revision in the structure of the work and the preparation of the first volume for the press occupied a great part of my time during the remainder of 1950, but when the first volume went to press I was confident that the second could easily be completed before August 1951. All the research on the official records had been completed, the structure of the whole work fixed, the material assembled in the appropriate chapters with connecting narratives, and most of the writing done.

At that time I was a newly-elected private member of Parliament with an expectation of being one for the next two years. Unexpectedly, a general election was held in April 1951, following a double dissolution of Parliament, and in May I was appointed to Cabinet. I served as a Cabinet Minister continuously for nearly eighteen years and during that time never had an uninterrupted period of even a week to call my own. Nevertheless, as opportunity offered for snatching a week-end here and there, some work on the history was done and when at last, following my retirement from politics in February 1969, I found myself with a clear six weeks in front of me, I had little difficulty in completing the writing of the volume.

This book should therefore be read as an integral part of a work of which only half was given in the first volume. It is the outcome of research and writing done in the same period as for the first volume.

The manuscript of more than half this volume was in its final form before 1951. Chapters 1 to 5 were approved by the General Editor in 1952 and sent to the printer and have not been touched by me since then. Chapter 6 was accepted at the same time by the General Editor but one section of it was not wholly satisfactory to me and I worked over it again at intervals and it had been brought to an advanced stage by 1959. Chapter 7 was in final form in 1963. The various appendixes were written at the same time as the chapters to which they refer. After my retirement

from politics, Chapters 9 and 10, in which there had been earlier collaboration between the General Editor and myself, were quickly completed and the main task to be done was the rearranging of Chapter 8 and the re-writing of it.

Two changes in the original structure of this volume were made in the course of the further work on it. Originally it was intended that this volume should contain a chapter on the social effects of the war in Australia. A good deal of preliminary research was done and a great quantity of material collected. It had been thought that something should be written on the effect of the wartime experience on Australian social life, on health, education, social habit, living conditions, the family, transfers of population, child welfare, any consequent problems of delinquency and so on. Two difficulties were encountered. One was in obtaining verifiable evidence. Many of those changes which might be measurable had not apparently been measured but were still matters for original investigation and record. The other was my own lack of expertness. It was recognised that the evaluation of such material as might be gathered would call for training in a sociological discipline different from that of the historian. In consultation with the General Editor it was decided to abandon that chapter and write off as lost time the many months already spent on it. A second decision concerned an account of the civilian war effort in the early days of the invasion of New Guinea. This difficulty was overcome by an arrangement under which Mr A. J. Sweeting wrote a separate narrative of these events to be published under his own name as an appendix.

Apart from the facts recited above concerning the progress of the work there is an additional reason why this volume may be judged as belonging to the same period as the first. I have consciously tried to make it so. Working throughout on material that had been assembled and arranged before 1951, I have tried to avoid writing into my early drafts the experience of later years. After deliberation I rejected any changes that altered the emphasis or the relative importance of the matters selected for attention by me when writing the first volume. I also refrained from a reassessment of the chief actors in the light of opinions formed about them in subsequent political developments and I tried to see their actions, as I saw them in 1949, in the context of the wartime events I had studied. I have not attempted to re-write the volume that was near completion in 1951, so as to help it to commend itself as a story written in 1969. On reflection, I do not think that truth has suffered from this self-discipline although it might be that I could have livened the narrative with stronger judgments than I chose to make twenty years ago.

In spite of the lapse of time, both Volumes I and II should be read in conjunction with one another. They were planned and the research and the writing done as though they were one work. To judge each volume fairly it should not be separated from the other. In some places the narrative in the second volume will not be clear and complete unless it is linked with the narrative in the first volume. The Preface to the first volume is also relevant to this volume.

I would hope, too, that fellow historians might read this volume as most of them read the first, as doing a service in laying a foundation on which other and better studies may be erected. It has been kept as a foundational work.

The long delay in completing the volume meant that before it appeared various other writers had published books or contributed articles to learned journals about some of its subject matter. What notice should be taken of these? It was decided, in consultation with the General Editor, that it would be impracticable and unwise to enter on any process of making such frequent alterations as would turn a basic study of the period into a sort of a cumulative record of historical studies in this field. Moreover, one had sufficient confidence in the thoroughness of the original research to be ready to let one's original judgments stand, not presumptuously as the last word to be spoken but as something that had been written to the best of one's ability and with full regard for the best canons of historical research. Now and again a later contribution revealed something more clearly than I had seen it, or presented a contrasting opinion so cogently that I felt obliged at least to draw attention to it and it will be seen that I have done so in an occasional footnote. In general, however, this volume rests on the research done by me before 1949.

Understandably, there has been some criticism over the delay. I can only offer an apology to the critics while expressing appreciation to those who have shown patience. The advanced stage reached in the composition of the volume left little occasion either to turn the volume over to another historian or to seek a co-author. The need was simply for two or three months of free time and the chances of political life might have given that to me at any time.

One other criticism has been made meanly and unjustly and it becomes necessary to say that I have no financial interest in this volume. Originally the writers of the war histories entered into a contract to produce the stipulated volume or volumes for a fixed sum. I had been paid a total of £1,000 out of the contractual amount when I became a political candidate and, to avoid the constitutional barrier to holding a seat in Parliament while having an interest in a contract with the Crown, the then Prime Minister, Mr Chifley, on the recommendation of the then Minister for the Interior, Mr H. V. Johnson, agreed to cancel the contract. Although subsequently it was decided that I should produce two volumes instead of one, I sought no further payment. Hence I have not been paid and have no claim to be paid anything for the remainder of the work I have done. The obligation that held me to the work was simply the "gentlemen's agreement" that I had with Messrs Chifley and Johnson, when they released me from the contract, that I would complete the job without payment. I have done so.

It is an occasion of great sadness to all who have been associated in any way with the Australian Official War History that the General Editor, Mr G. M. Long, died before the full series of twenty-two volumes which he planned and supervised had been completed. He lived long enough to see nineteen published, and the twentieth in the press and to have the

certainty that the remaining two were on their way. Gavin Long was appointed General Editor in 1943 and he dedicated more than half of his working life to this national and monumental task. He planned the work, chose the writers and edited the volumes and, above all, it was he who set the standards which distinguish this series—standards of thoroughness, care over detail, clarity of expression, fairness and the rejection of meanness and triviality—and it was he who kept before all writers the ideal of the quotation he placed on his official letter-head:

> What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mists of ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation, a possession forever.

His editorial work was patient, thoughtful and meticulous. Perhaps he did not claim so close a knowledge of the political shifts and changes of the war as he did of the military events, but he was most careful to ensure that there was a true correspondence and a total coherence between the narrative of political decisions and the narrative of the three armed services and the medical services, and his guidance was of the utmost value to me. As a great editor he was not only meticulous over the correctness of detail and the balance of related parts, but kept before himself constantly a view of the whole work and was able to remind authors such as myself of matters beyond our own view. Like all other writers I owe much to him. In the final stages of my work, particularly on the last two chapters of this volume, he became not only an editor but a collaborator. This work owes much to his patience, forbearance, encouragement and constant help. Even more richly I remember the friendship of a resolute and a gentle man—one of the nobler Australians of my generation, one who had courage, honour and understanding, and who could put up with anything except a lowering of the standard.

I also acknowledge gratefully the help of Miss Joyce Fisher, who was research assistant during 1952-54 and for periods in 1959-60. Mr A. J. Sweeting, who took over the chief responsibility for the completion of the war histories after the retirement of Mr Long in 1963, became counsellor, editor and collaborator, and greatly assisted me in the final stages of this work. Throughout a long period Miss Mary Gilchrist has shown almost uncanny skill, understanding and patience in interpreting manuscript, checking and correcting typescript and locating needed material, and has carried the chief burden for the index, illustrations, footnotes and supplementary pages. Without the help of these three the work could never have been completed.

P.H.

Claremont, W.A.
31 March 1969.

CHRONOLOGY

1941	7-8 Dec	Japanese land in Thailand and Malaya and attack Pearl Harbour
	10 Dec	H.M.S's *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* sunk off Malaya
	11 Dec	Germany and Italy declare war on the United States
	24 Dec	Anglo-American conference opens in Washington to consider war strategy. Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt attend
1942	23 Jan	Japanese forces capture Rabaul
	3 Feb	First Japanese air raid on Port Moresby
	19 Feb	Japanese attack Darwin
	8 Mar	Japanese troops enter Rangoon Japanese forces occupy Lae and Salamaua
	9 Mar	A.I.F. troops from the Middle East begin to arrive in Australia
	17 Mar	General Douglas MacArthur arrives in Australia
	26 Mar	General Blamey becomes Commander-in-Chief of Australian Military Forces
	6 Apr	41st United States Division arrives in Australia
	9 Apr	American forces on Bataan surrender
	18 Apr	G.H.Q. South-West Pacific Area established in Melbourne
	5-8 May	Battle of the Coral Sea
	20 May	Allied forces withdraw from Burma
	26 May	German offensive in Western Desert begins
	31 May-1 Jun	Japanese midget submarines raid Sydney Harbour
	4-6 Jun	Battle of Midway Island
	18 Jun	Mr Churchill arrives in America for conferences with President Roosevelt
	21 Jul	Japanese invade Papua
	7 Aug	American marines land in southern Solomon Islands
	19 Aug	Dieppe raid
	25-26 Aug	Japanese forces land at Milne Bay
	17 Sep	Japanese drive over Owen Stanleys halted by Australians at Imita Ridge
	25 Sep	Australians begin counter-offensive in the Owen Stanleys
	23-24 Oct	Battle of El Alamein begins
	2 Nov	Kokoda recaptured
	7-8 Nov	Allied landings in French North Africa
	12-15 Nov	Naval Battle of Guadalcanal
	19 Nov	Russians announce launching of counter-offensive at Stalingrad

1943	23 Jan	Organised Japanese resistance in Papua ends
	29 Jan	British Eighth Army enters Tripoli
	18 Feb	9th Australian Division arrives at Fremantle
	2-4 Mar	Battle of Bismarck Sea
	12 May	President Roosevelt, Mr Churchill and the Combined Chiefs of Staff meet at Trident Conference in Washington
	13 May	Campaign in North Africa ends
	14 May	Hospital ship *Centaur* sunk by Japanese
	30 Jun	Americans land on New Georgia in central Solomons
	10 Jul	Allies invade Sicily
	14-24 Aug	Mr Churchill, President Roosevelt and the Combined Chiefs of Staff attend first Quebec Conference
	21 Aug	Australian Labour Party wins Federal elections
	3 Sep	Allies invade Italy
	11 Sep	Australian troops enter Salamaua
	16 Sep	7th and 9th Australian Divisions enter Lae
	2 Oct	Australians capture Finschhafen
	1 Nov	American forces land on Bougainville in northern Solomons
	22 Nov	Mr Churchill, President Roosevelt and General Chiang Kai-shek meet at Cairo Conference
	28-30 Nov	Mr Churchill, President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin attend conference at Teheran
	15 Dec	Americans land on New Britain
1944	2 Jan	American Sixth Army task force lands at Saidor in New Guinea
	23 Jan	Australian troops clear Shaggy Ridge
	31 Jan	American forces invade Marshall Islands
	22 Apr	American landings at Hollandia and Aitape in New Guinea
	24 Apr	Australian troops enter Madang, New Guinea
	27 May	American forces land on Biak Island
	6 Jun	Allied forces invade Normandy
	19-20 Jun	Naval Battle of the Philippine Sea
	21 Jul	U.S. marines invade Guam
	15 Aug	Allies invade southern France
	17 Sep	First Allied Airborne Army lands in Holland
	5 Oct	British forces land on mainland of Greece
	11 Oct	American Third Fleet attacks Luzon in the Philippines
	23-26 Oct	Naval Battle of Leyte Gulf
	24 Nov	Superfortresses attack Japan from bases in the Marianas
1945	3 Jan	Allies occupy Akyab in Burma
	9 Jan	American forces land on Luzon

1945	22 Jan	Burma Road re-opened
	4 Feb	Mr Churchill, President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin meet at Yalta Conference
	1 Apr	American forces land on Okinawa
	12 Apr	Death of President Roosevelt. Mr Harry S. Truman becomes President of the United States
	28 Apr	Mussolini shot by partisans in Italy
	30 Apr	Hitler commits suicide in Berlin
	1 May	Australian troops land on Tarakan Island
	7 May	Germany surrenders unconditionally
	11 May	Wewak captured by 6th Australian Division
	26 Jun	United Nations Charter signed at San Francisco
	5 Jul	Death of Australian Prime Minister, Mr John Curtin
	13 Jul	Mr J. B. Chifley elected leader of Federal Parliamentary Labour Party and becomes Prime Minister
	16 Jul	Representatives of United States, Britain and the Soviet Union attend conference at Potsdam, Germany, to draw up terms for Japanese surrender and discuss military and political issues connected with the termination of hostilities
	26 Jul	Mr Clement Attlee elected Prime Minister of Great Britain
	6 Aug	First atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
	8 Aug	Soviet Union declares war on Japan, effective from 9th August
	9 Aug	Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki
	15 Aug	VJ-Day. All offensive action against Japan comes to an end
	2 Sep	Japanese envoys sign the Allied instrument of surrender aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay

CHAPTER 1

WAR IN THE FAR EAST, DECEMBER 1941-JANUARY 1942

1—FROM CONFIDENCE TO FEAR

FROM 8th December 1941 onwards war meant for Australia principally the war in Asia and the Pacific. For almost another year part of the A.I.F. continued to fight in the Middle East; until the end of the war her airmen continued to fight in the air over Europe; but her major war effort, engaging most of her manpower and resources, was henceforward directed against Japan.

The first two years had been a period of gallantry on foreign battlefields and of progress in building up war industry and training and equipping an expeditionary force. They had laid the foundations for a greater effort but that effort was called forth by the Japanese attack. The wartime memories of the greater part of the Australian population, particularly civilians, are memories of fighting against Japan. For many of them life was deeply and urgently changed only after Japan attacked.

Furthermore, for the remainder of the war the whole theme of propaganda inside Australia was the importance of war in the Far East. Ministerial speeches constantly exhorted the Australian people and the Allies to greater efforts against Japan or complained of neglect of this theatre of war. The war effort against Japan was, for more than three years, a national grievance as well as a matter of national pride.

For some of the Australian people, too, war experience was reinforced by the teaching of 50 years that the destiny of Australia was in the Pacific and that the one enemy to fear was Japan. Some of those who had argued in favour of home defence and who had feared entanglement in Europe read the events as confirmation of their own views. Danger was now seen clearly even by those who had previously suspected political manipulation behind all moves in power politics and had seen imperialism at work in every movement of troops. The political speeches about neglect in the Far East reinforced the minority who distrusted England. The peril of the nation called forth all those ideas that made up a wholly Australian patriotism. Thus, many of those who had not yet intellectually embraced the war against Germany and Italy, waged mainly in Europe, were ready to make the war against Japan their own.

Australia now saw herself engaged in a direct struggle for survival. Such an experience both called forth the strength and exposed the weakness of the nation. In the following pages, as the conduct of war against Japan by the Australian nation is traced, the Australian reader will discern national shortcomings as well as the attributes of national greatness.

In particular Australians went through the bitter experience of feeling, perhaps wrongly, that they had been let down, that the Allies had not done all for them that they might have done and that their struggles and their

dangers were not fully appreciated in London and Washington. For a time they tended to develop a proprietary interest in the grievances as well as in the sacrifices and triumphs of the war in the Pacific. It would have been hard to persuade a great number of Australians that they were not the principal object of Japanese aggression or that they were not the principal adversary of Japan.

In effect, Australia fought two wars between 1939 and 1945—a war against Germany and Italy as part of a British Empire war effort, and a war against Japan, in alliance with the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The one was a war fought mainly overseas; the other was fought mainly on or near Australian territory. In the first the raising and maintaining of an army, planned in five divisions, was the focus of the Australian war effort and was accompanied by the building up of war industries. In the second, Australia was at first in the position of being the last stronghold firm against the Japanese advance and then the earliest of the main bases in the great struggle in the Pacific for Allied victory. Her total resources were committed to that end.

This may not be the true picture of the war in the Pacific. But it was the picture which Australians, both those in authority and those who were workers or fighters or newspaper readers, had before them from 1942 to 1945.

The first Japanese attack was met with confidence. Two months of worsening news brought resolution. On the night of 7th-8th December, Australian time, the Japanese attack was launched.[1] Guam fell on the 10th and on that day the British battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were sunk by Japanese air attack off the Malayan coast. Day by day the Japanese advanced down the Malay Peninsula towards Singapore. They had invaded the Philippines on the 10th and before the end of the month Manila had been evacuated. Hong Kong surrendered on Christmas Day after an eighteen days' siege. Near noon on 4th January the first attack was made on territory under Australian control: a force of Japanese bombers from bases in the Japanese mandated islands dropped bombs on an R.A.A.F. aerodrome at Rabaul in New Britain, causing damage to service installations and casualties to natives. Other high-level attacks followed on the 6th, 7th and 16th. On the 20th Japanese bombers and dive bombers delivered the first full-scale low-level attack.

Australians still had their thoughts mainly on Malaya. News that the 8th Division of the A.I.F. had been in action came on 16th January. The first feeling was: "Now they'll learn something." The reports were that the Australians, fighting magnificently, had given the enemy his first defeat; the steady oncoming of the enemy would be checked; but news of retreat continued; the Australians had been let down by the troops on their flank. If only Britain would hurry up with the promised air reinforcements all would be well. There were further retreats. This was just the prearranged plan to withdraw steadily, inflicting as much damage as

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the dates quoted will be those of the local time at the place concerned.

possible on the enemy. The word "infiltration" began to be passed from mouth to mouth of amateur strategists who explained that Japanese tactics were compelling the Allied troops to fall back to avoid being cut off but that in reality the Allied army was still intact. Behind them there was still Singapore, a fortress which could be held for at least six months, and before the end of that time reinforcements would have come. But each piece of confidence was answered with worse news from the battle-front. General Douglas MacArthur, commanding the United States and local forces in the Philippines, was also doing less than he had so firmly predicted.

On 21st January a convoy had been sighted approaching Rabaul from the north-west. On the following day, in a final attack, 45 planes swept in over the town. Then the wireless station was silent. On the 21st, Japanese aircraft had attacked Bulolo, Lae and Salamaua for the first time; on the 23rd Kavieng in New Ireland was occupied. Australian air reconnaissance from Port Moresby disclosed 11 enemy merchant vessels in the harbour at Rabaul, while off the entrance were three cruisers, a destroyer and an aircraft carrier. The small Australian force had vainly engaged the enemy in defence of the Australian mandate. Ministers warned the Australian public of the possibility of invasion.

The beginnings of recrimination against Britain appeared. The Minister for Supply and Development, Mr J. A. Beasley, had said on 23rd January:

> The Japanese are in New Guinea. In New Guinea they are on the threshold of Australia. While Malaya lasts their western flank is held and their eastern flank must hesitate. Therefore the fight for Malaya is vital; it anticipates, perhaps averts, the last great battle before Australia. Australia has done its part in supplying troops, planes and ships for the defence of Malaya commensurate with the responsibility which the Australian Government has to its own people. Therefore the responsibility to add to what Australia has done rests upon the Government to which has been committed the care of these colonies in the Pacific. . . . Unless the British Empire wants its annals to contain another Dunkirk, another Greece, another Crete, more guns, aeroplanes, troops and ships must get to Malaya now. . . . We in Australia have been asked to accept in complete faith the doctrine that in the final hours of crisis the steel walls of the British Navy would stand between us and danger. The danger is here and Britain today must strain the whole of her resources to see that the steel and the iron necessary to turn back the southward drive of Japan reach Malaya without delay. This is imperative, not from the point of view of Australia alone, but from that of the British Empire as a whole.[2]

Yet there was still heartening news. The Dutch and American air and naval forces attacked a Japanese convoy in Macassar Strait and in a battle lasting five days were reported to have sunk 15 transports and damaged 22.[3] On the 31st the Allied forces withdrew into Singapore Island, but confidence in the holding of Singapore and the defence of the Indonesian barrier was still so high that on 1st February, with the completion of arrangements for an exchange of diplomatic representatives

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[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 16, p. 9.

[3] This proved a wild assertion. The four American destroyers engaged claimed the loss of five enemy ships and some damaged. (See S. E. Morison, *The Rising Sun in the Pacific* (1948), pp. 285-91, Vol III in the series *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II.*) The Japanese landing at Balikpapan was achieved on 24th January despite this action.

between Australia and the Netherlands, the appointment was announced of a Consul-General to go to Batavia to assist even closer cooperation in the vigorous defence of Java, this "inner fortress" and site of the headquarters of General Sir Archibald Wavell, newly-appointed Commander-in-Chief of the A.B.D.A. Area. On 3rd February the Minister for the Army, Mr F. M. Forde, broadcast a message of "confidence and encouragement" to the Australian and British forces in Singapore, "now approaching the climax of the battle" and assured them that Australia had done everything possible to ensure that help would come with all possible speed. "It will come," he declaimed, "not as a few consignments from a shrinking store, but as a stream which will swell to a flood, which will grow to an overwhelming torrent."

On the same day enemy bombers raided Port Moresby in Papua for the first time. Five days later the Japanese had landed on Singapore Island; they landed at Macassar on the 9th and next day they made another landing in New Britain.

On the 15th Singapore fell and the Japanese were already in force in the islands to the north of Australia. Thus in two months Australians came from complacency or confidence to the threshold of fear for their own survival.

2—THE DECLARATION OF WAR

From about 5th December onwards higher official circles in Australia had been aware that the danger point was approaching and official messages had told them of Japanese shipping movements. The first news that an attack had actually been made was heard early on the morning of 8th December (Australian time) from the short-wave news services of broadcasting stations. The Prime Minister, Mr John Curtin, and most of the Cabinet were in Melbourne. At 1 a.m. on the 8th Curtin had gone to bed in his room at the Victoria Palace Hotel in central Melbourne where he usually stayed. At 5.45 a.m. the monitoring service of the Department of Information, which listened around the clock to short-wave radio, picked up a flash from Washington that Pearl Harbour (Hawaii) and the army and navy bases at Manila were being attacked by air. Mr Curtin was awakened by his press secretary. The information was immediately passed to service chiefs and members of the War Cabinet. Key personnel were summoned at once to Victoria Barracks. By breakfast time it was clear that Japan had entered the war but the early news spoke only of the attack on Pearl Harbour.

Post-war investigation has established that the order of events was in fact different to what was publicly made known at the time in Australia. Action commenced with the shelling of Kota Bharu (Malaya) about 2.40 a.m. (Eastern Australian time) and the landing there at 3.5. At 4.5 the Japanese landed at Singora and Patani (Thailand) and at 4.25 attacked Pearl Harbour. The first air raid on Singapore was at 7.10 and at 8.27 Guam was attacked.

When the War Cabinet met later in the day, in company with the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of the Air Staff and the acting Chief of the Naval Staff, they had before them a circular telegram from the Dominions Office, conveying a report from the naval Commander-in-Chief of the China Station that the Japanese were attempting to land from five ships on the east coast of Malaya just south of the frontier of Thailand, and a British Admiralty message, picked up by the navy: "Commence hostilities against Japan at once." They were also informed of the reports by short-wave broadcasting stations of Japanese attacks on Hawaii.

After discussion, it was agreed that the situation should be accepted as involving Australia in a state of war against Japan.[4] Although, for reasons to be discussed below, the formal decision to declare war was not made until the 9th,[5] the Prime Minister, in a national broadcast on the evening of the 8th said:

> We are at war with Japan. That has happened because, in the first instance, Japanese naval and air forces launched an unprovoked attack on British and United States territory; because our vital interests are imperilled and because the rights of free people in the whole Pacific are assailed. As a result the Australian Government this afternoon took the necessary steps which will mean that a state of war exists between Australia and Japan. Tomorrow, in common with the United Kingdom, the United States and the Netherlands East Indies Governments, the Australian Government will formally and solemnly declare the state of war it has striven so sincerely and strenuously to avoid.

This statement, though too loosely phrased to throw any further light on the questions of constitutional doctrine implicit in the statement by the former Prime Minister, Mr R. G. Menzies, on 3rd September 1939, does illustrate the fact that in December 1941, as clearly as in September 1939, Australia did not consider herself to have any effective choice whether to go into war or stay out of it.

The outbreak of war with Japan did, however, afford an occasion for constitutional innovation in the formal procedure followed by Australia in making a declaration of war. The ground had been prepared for this innovation by discussions which had been proceeding during November regarding a proposed declaration of war on Finland, Hungary and Rumania, and it is necessary to digress for the space of three or four paragraphs to consider this parallel case.

In October the Soviet Government had asked the United Kingdom to declare war on these three states, all of whom were fighting against the Soviet Union; and, after consideration in both the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council, the Australian Government told the United Kingdom in effect that the hesitations which the British felt seemed unconvincing and could not be justified publicly, and that a refusal to accede to the request would have bad effects on Russian morale. Therefore, subject to any pronounced American reaction, the various difficulties felt

[4] War Cabinet Minute 1557, 8 Dec 1941.

[5] Advisory War Council Minute 586, 9 Dec 1941; *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 169, pp. 1068-9; *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 252, 9 Dec 1941.

by the United Kingdom should be put frankly to Marshal Stalin, who was a realist, and the British decision should be governed by his attitude.

This course was followed and, after further diplomatic exchanges and a last appeal to Finland to cease hostilities, the United Kingdom decided towards the end of November to declare war on the three states. Australia approved.[6] After a brief interval during which a further opportunity was given to Finland to change her attitude, the United Kingdom declarations were made on 7th December.

In anticipation of the breach with Finland, Hungary and Rumania, the Attorney-General, Dr H. V. Evatt, set in train inquiries regarding the procedure for a separate declaration by Australia and on 3rd December Curtin informed the High Commissioner in London of the procedure proposed and asked him to make preliminary arrangements for carrying it into effect. After consultation with the Palace authorities and the acceptance of some adjustments suggested by them, everything was in readiness for the declaration to be made and the proclamation of war was issued after approval at meetings of the Cabinet and Executive Council on Monday, 8th December.[7] The separateness of the Australian action was further emphasised by the action of the Australian Minister in Washington, on specific instructions, in making a request to the Secretary of State, distinct from the request made by the British Ambassador, that the United States Ministers at Helsinki, Budapest and Bucharest might inform the governments to which they were accredited that Australia had declared the existence of a state of war with Finland, Hungary and Rumania respectively as from 5 p.m., 8th December (Eastern Australian time).

In the case of Japan, the procedure which had been worked out for Finland, Hungary and Rumania was repeated. On 8th December the Prime Minister instructed the High Commissioner in London to place the advice of His Majesty's Ministers in the Australian Commonwealth before the King. On 9th December the proclamation of the existence of a state of war with Japan as from 5 p.m. on 8th December (Eastern Australian time) was gazetted.[8] On the same day the Australian Chargé d'Affaires in Tokyo was instructed to so inform the Japanese Government. The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the Prime Ministers of Canada, New Zealand and South Africa and Australian representatives abroad were notified.

What were the main features of the new procedure? In September 1939 the procedure followed by the four Dominions had varied. The view taken by the Australian Government had been, in the words of Menzies, "Britain is at war therefore Australia is at war", and hence the only formal act had been a notification in the *Gazette* that war had broken out between Great Britain and Germany and a request to the United Kingdom to inform the German Government that Australia was associated in the war with

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[6] Telegram to Dominions Office, 29 Nov 1941.

[7] *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 251, 8 Dec 1941.

[8] *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 252, 9 Dec 1941. See Parliamentary Papers, 1940-41, No. 66, *Declaration of Existence of State of War with Finland, Hungary, Rumania and Japan, 8th December 1941*; *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 169, pp. 1088-9. The Royal Instrument affecting the declaration of war with Finland, Hungary and Rumania was published in *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 104, 7 Apr 1942.

Germany. The procedure followed in New Zealand had been similar. In Canada and South Africa, however, proclamations had been made in the name of the King under the Great Seal of the respective Dominions declaring that the Dominion was at war. In both Dominions, the decision had been made after debates in the Dominion parliaments.

In December 1941 the Australian Labour Government's interest in following the Canadian and South African example was an interest in procedures appropriate to the constitutional status of a Dominion and did not arise from any doubt as to what the will of Australia would be. There does not appear to have been any suggestion at any time that, before the declarations of war were made on the 8th and 9th, these questions should be debated in Parliament or that any action other than a decision by the Australian Cabinet was necessary.

Dr Evatt, who as Attorney-General and by reason of his own interest in constitutional questions took the initiative in this matter, defined his purpose as being to use a form which would make it clear (*a*) that there was an unbroken chain of prerogative authority from His Majesty to the Governor-General of Australia and (*b*) that His Majesty was acting exclusively on the advice of His Majesty's Ministers in the Commonwealth. The fact that the King did so act would appear to have disposed of any constitutional argument which might have previously been raised as to whether these two propositions were well founded.

One initial difficulty which was raised by the Australian Government's legal advisers concerned the fact that in both Canada and South Africa there were statutory provisions which facilitated the taking of formal steps to give legal effect to the constitutional position. In Canada, the *Seals Act, 1939,* and in South Africa the *Royal Executive Functions and Seals Act, 1934* and the *Status of the Union Act, 1934,* were considered to have made the position in those Dominions different from that in Australia, where there had been no delegation by the King to the Governor-General of the power to declare war and make peace and where there were in existence no statutory provisions on the subject. No doubt valid legislation could be enacted in Australia, for it might be assumed that in the grants of power in relation to defence and external affairs the Imperial Parliament had by "necessary intendment" conferred power upon the Commonwealth Parliament to interfere with the prerogative in relation to the declaration of war. In the absence of such legislation and of any express delegation from the King, however, it was submitted that the Governor-General could not exercise the power to declare war on behalf of Australia.

If this view were accepted it would mean that the most straightforward way to make a separate declaration of war by Australia would be to ask the King to make it. Such a declaration by the King himself would require the affixing of the Great Seal of the Realm, an act which could not be performed without the intervention of a United Kingdom Minister. For that reason the procedure, even although it gave a separate declaration of war, on the advice of His Majesty's Ministers in the Commonwealth,

would not express the fact as clearly and publicly as desired nor would it demonstrate that there was an unbroken chain of prerogative authority from His Majesty to the Governor-General. The answer had to be either legislation or an express delegation of power to declare war from the King to the Governor-General.

The procedure first suggested by Evatt was that, on the advice of His Majesty's Ministers in Australia, an instrument would be issued by His Majesty to the Governor-General authorising him to issue a proclamation declaring the existence of a state of war. Such instrument would be countersigned by some person—the High Commissioner for Australia in London was suggested—who had been formally authorised by the Governor-General in Council in Australia to act for and on behalf of the Prime Minister of Australia. By virtue of this authority, the Governor-General of Australia, on the advice of the Australian Executive Council, would issue a proclamation declaring and proclaiming that a state of war with the countries named was in existence in the Commonwealth of Australia and its territories.

The Palace authorities, cordially agreeing with the two points which Evatt wished the procedure to express, suggested the procedure that was actually followed. They found difficulty in the rule that only a Minister of the Crown could countersign such an instrument and that the counter-signature should be affixed after and not before the King had signed. Therefore they suggested that, as the time was short, the King should treat the telegram of instructions to the High Commissioner, Mr S. M. Bruce, as formal advice from the Commonwealth Government advising him to issue the instrument delegating power to the Governor-General. The High Commissioner should prepare and submit forthwith a draft instrument for the King's signature. Immediately after signature a telegram would be sent to the Commonwealth Government so that the proclamation could be issued at once. The instrument would be forwarded to the Commonwealth Government by air mail for counter-signature in due course by the Prime Minister.

This procedure was being followed in respect to the declaration against Finland, Hungary and Rumania when the Japanese attack led the Australian Government to seek to have it applied, too, in respect to Japan. Curtin asked Bruce by telegram to submit to His Majesty a recommendation for the issue to the Governor-General of an instrument in similar terms, substituting Japan for the three countries previously named. His Majesty was asked to accept the telegram to Bruce as the advice of His Majesty's Ministers in the Commonwealth.

Curtin added to his telegram to Bruce: "As time is so short, Government may act here in anticipation of the issue of such an instrument." In fact, although all measures had been prepared, a cablegram reporting that the King had signed the instrument was received from Bruce before the proclamation was issued, but Curtin apparently thought it advisable to make the public announcement that Australia was at war in the national broadcast on the evening of the 8th.

Shorn of legal formalities and expressions, the sequence of events meant not only that a procedure for a declaration of war by a Dominion had been worked out but that on two occasions His Majesty's Ministers in the Commonwealth had tendered advice to His Majesty by telegram; the advice had been accepted, and a telegram in reply had been, to all intents and purposes, the effective delegation of prerogative authority. The signed documents forwarded by mail for countersigning in Australia were of archival rather than executive importance.[9]

A similar procedure was followed a month later in the declaration of a state of war between Australia and Bulgaria as from 6th January 1942. This decision was made by the Australian Government consequential on a declaration of war by Bulgaria on Great Britain and the United States of America and other evidence of "Bulgaria's full complicity with the Axis as a satellite power in the same category as Finland, Hungary and Rumania with which nations the British Commonwealth is already at war". The records do not disclose any consideration of the thesis that because Britain is at war Australia is at war. Having regard to the fact that the British notification of 29th December 1941 stated that a state of war had existed between the United Kingdom and Bulgaria as from 13th December 1941, and the Australian Government took care to make the Australian Proclamation declare the existence of a state of war as from 6th January 1942—the day on which the Australian decision was made—it would appear that, as from 13th December to 6th January, the United Kingdom had been at war with Bulgaria but Australia had not. This could be construed to mean that the Australian Government had expressed an adherence to the view that Dominion neutrality was possible and that the existence of a state of war in the United Kingdom did not necessarily involve Australia. Bulgaria, with whom Australia never came into conflict during the course of hostilities, was an ideal example with which to illustrate constitutional points. There was no reference to Parliament of any question related to the declaration of war on Bulgaria but the decision was made in consultation with and with the concurrence of the Advisory War Council.[1]

Subsequently Australia declared war with Thailand by a similar procedure as from 2nd March at 3 p.m. (Eastern Australian Time).[2]

A week after the proclamation of war against Japan had been issued, parliamentary approval was obtained. Parliament, which had adjourned

[9] An incidental and minor feature of this constitutional innovation was the part played by modern methods of communications. Telegraphy as well as the Balfour Declaration contributed to the growth of Dominion status. Australia had it in mind to use modern inventions in a more novel manner. One suggestion was that the actual instrument should be sent from and to Australia by radio in the same way as news photographs are transmitted. The feasibility of sending it from Australia, ready signed, was ruled out by the objection that the counter-signature of the Australian Minister must be affixed after the King had signed. When inquiries were made about transmitting the instrument bearing the King's signature and the seal from London technical difficulties, some due to wartime limitations, were such that the method was abandoned as impracticable.

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 656, 6 Jan 1942; *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 14, 14 Jan 1942; statement by Minister for External Affairs, 14 Jan 1942 (*Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 15, p. 13).

[2] *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 77, 10 Mar 1942. The Royal Instrument was published in *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 198, 20 Jul 1942.

on 27th November, met on 16th December, when the Prime Minister made a statement on the international situation and tabled papers relating to the American-Japanese conversations of November and December and the Australian declarations of war. Japan, he said, had struck like an assassin in the night. The attacks made against Great Britain and the United States of America were accepted by Australia as constituting a direct attack upon itself.

It is of constitutional interest that Curtin linked the calling together of Parliament, not with the proclamation declaring a state of war, but with a proclamation which had been issued calling up men for military service in accordance with the provisions of the *Defence Act*. "It is a part of the law of this land," he said, "that when such a proclamation is issued, should Parliament not then be sitting, it shall be summoned to meet within ten days thereafter. That procedure the Government has followed, with the result that the Parliament is now asked to endorse the advice which led to the issue of the proclamation by the Governor-General of Australia on behalf of His Majesty the King."

It would appear from Curtin's words that the necessity to call Parliament together was presented by the *Defence Act* but advantage was taken of the occasion to obtain formal parliamentary approval of the declaration of war. Although he created a precedent by seeking the passage of a resolution approving the Government's action in respect to the declaration of war, he did not appear to have advanced anywhere the thesis that it was constitutionally necessary to do so. Nor did the argument of Evatt in justification of the new procedures followed on this occasion bring Parliament into the process of declaring war. His argument was that the Australian Commonwealth possessed full status in every aspect of its external relationships and "it is a necessary consequence of that status that, in relation to Australia, the vital decision as to peace or war with any country should be determined exclusively by Commonwealth Ministers".

Parliamentary approval was not an essential step in the new procedure for declaring war, but, as in September 1939, the calling of Parliament was an essential and, indeed, natural step to take in waging war as a democracy. Curtin's words to the House were not those of a constitutionalist but of a democratic leader. The whole of the resources of the country must be made available for the waging of war, he said.

> The organisation of a non-military people for the purposes of complete war must necessarily effect a revolution in the lives of the people. A transformation so great as that which the Government regards as imperative is inevitably beset with many difficulties, and must create many problems. It may even be marked by some degree of confusion. There may be dislocation and disturbance which normally would be the occasion of considerable criticism and much fretfulness. People do not like their routine to be upset, but the enemy has already upset the routine of the nation. Whatever be the inconveniences or losses which the citizens of Australia may have to experience as the result of the complete conversion of the nation from the pursuits of peace to those of war they will be as nothing compared with what is at stake. I know that in calling upon the people of Australia to act

concertedly, in inviting them to give whatever they can to the service of the central administration, we may rely upon an effective response, because the people will acknowledge that such order and promptness as are necessary to deal with the emergency can be best achieved by obeying the directions of the authorities, rather than by wasting time in fault-finding, criticising and opposing.

The Prime Minister described the situation of Australia and the action taken or to be taken to defend Australia.

In the debate which followed Opposition speakers gave assurances of cooperation. The leaders made suggestions for a Supreme War Council, in which both unity in the waging of the war and power for an executive drawn from the ablest men in Parliament would be obtained. Menzies spoke of a public demand for "a small, highly-authorised executive government" instead of the vain search for effective administration "by a kind of public meeting". When the country came to realise the full gravity of the position, he said, it would demand that a small executive, comprising the best men in Australia, irrespective of the political parties to which they belonged, should handle the affairs of the country. "What does it matter whether they support one party or another? We shall all be one party when the bombs fall in our streets." To that small group Parliament must be ready to give full and unqualified executive authority.

Other Opposition members, however, made statements and were answered by Government supporters in a way that showed that the prospects of that kind of unity were as remote as they had ever been. There were still differences of opinion on whether to fight overseas or concentrate narrowly on home defence; between those who would subordinate everything to the fighting of the war and those who still wanted the right to criticise; and above all a great difference on the subject of conscription. The debate clearly revealed the cleavage of the parties on that issue and foreshadowed the struggles yet to be waged on it within the Government itself. "I do not think it is possible to get a united people, or Parliament, on any proposal for compulsory service overseas," said Mr M. M. Blackburn, whose association with Labour went back to the war of 1914-18.[3] "The Government party is led by men whose rise to influence in the Labour movement began with the conscription campaign. Their most sacred memories of conflict and struggle in this country centre on that struggle. Can anyone imagine the honorable member for Melbourne Ports (Mr Holloway) or the Prime Minister (Mr Curtin) being a party to the introduction of compulsion for overseas service? It is impossible to expect that the present leaders of the Government can so far forget their past words and deeds as to support conscription for overseas service."

In both the House of Representatives and the Senate differences in outlook between members of the Government and Opposition parties were still apparent; the disposition to make party political scores was still evident on both sides. Nevertheless both Chambers agreed on the voices, without dissent, to the Government resolution approving the declaration of war

[3] See *The Government and the People 1939-1941* (1952).

and pledging themselves "to take every step deemed necessary to defend this Commonwealth and its territories, to carry on hostilities in association with our Allies, and to achieve final victory over our enemies".[4]

3—HOW THE SITUATION WAS SEEN AND THE FORCES AVAILABLE TO MEET IT

In the changed circumstances in which Australia found herself in December 1941, the whole nature and extent of the war effort had to be reconsidered. Undoubtedly the effort must be intensified, but calling up more men for service or giving orders for more production of the materials of war would not be enough. Only after an exact assessment of the situation and of existing resources could the Government determine where the greatest need lay and in what manner that need could best be met.

At War Cabinet meetings on 8th, 9th, 11th and 12th December urgent decisions were taken on the advice of the Chiefs of Staff and in consultation with the Advisory War Council, which also met in Melbourne on the 9th and the 12th. The military decisions were based very largely on an appreciation prepared by the Australian Chiefs of Staff, at the direction of the Prime Minister, on the defence of Australia and of those areas for which Australia had accepted responsibility in pre-war discussions with the British, Dutch and New Zealanders.

Two main possibilities were seen by the Chiefs of Staff when trying to provide for local defence and final opposition to any invasion of Australia. One was that Japan would attempt to move southward step by step. In that case the outcome of operations in Malaya and possibly in the Netherlands East Indies would determine whether and when Australia would have to defend her shores and territory. The second possibility was that Japan, who had shown bold aggression against America, might make a direct move on Australia by way of the islands to the north and north-east. Writing on 11th December, the Australian Government's military advisers described the possibilities to the War Cabinet and, in turn, to the Advisory War Council, as follows:

> A probable initial Japanese course of action would be an attempt to occupy New Guinea (Rabaul), Papua (Port Moresby) and New Caledonia (Noumea) from the Japanese bases in the Carolines and Marshall Islands. An attack on Rabaul, which is within long range of land-based aircraft operating from the Japanese bases is a likely first step, but the possibility of a simultaneous attack on some or all of these places and any of the outer islands in the Australian sphere cannot be excluded.
>
> The capture of any of the outlying islands would provide the enemy with bases for the development of attacks against the mainland of Australia at a later stage.
>
> In addition—
>
> (*a*) The occupation of Rabaul and Port Moresby would deny us and the U.S.A. bases for naval and air operations against the Japanese Mandated Islands.

[4] See *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 169, pp. 1067-1133 and 1138-1163.

(*b*) The occupation of New Caledonia would deny us and the U.S.A. a link in a chain of communications. Further, it is important for us to deny Japan the nickel deposits of New Caledonia.

Darwin is the only main fleet operating base for Allied naval forces operating in the eastern end of the Malay Barrier. There are some 100,000 tons of naval fuel oil held there. It is an air force station, the target is an attractive one and, in spite of the fact that it would be necessary for naval enemy forces to penetrate the Malay Barrier, an attack by bombardment squadron or carrier-borne aircraft is a strong possibility. The capture of Timor would greatly facilitate air attack. Seaborne raids . . . are considered unlikely at present in view of the size of the army garrison, but an attempt to seize Darwin would become a strong possibility in the event of the defeat of the Allied naval forces or the capture of Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies.

The most probable form of attack on the mainland of Australia at the moment is naval and air bombardment of important objectives (such as industrial works at Sydney, Newcastle or Kembla) by a fast capital ship and cruisers with or without aircraft carriers. Seaborne raids against selected land objectives are possible. However, the vulnerable points which would be the object of such raids can be protected by considerable army forces.

The defeat of the Allied naval forces or the capture of Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies leading to occupation of bases to the north-east of Australia would enable the Japanese to invade Australia. These happenings are possible and as no reliable estimate of the time factor can be deduced, it is necessary to establish and train now the forces that would be required to prevent and to meet an invasion.[5]

The Chiefs of Staff thought that a Japanese attack on any one of the outlying centres—Rabaul, Port Moresby, New Caledonia or Timor—would probably be carried out by a division, with accompanying naval forces, including aircraft carriers, and any attempt to invade Australia itself would probably be carried out by a force of about eight divisions with accompanying naval forces, including aircraft carriers, supported by air attack from bases in adjacent islands. Other less ambitious attacks might take the form of seaborne raids on the mainland or attacks by fast capital ships and cruisers, with or without an aircraft carrier.

That was the picture placed before Australian Ministers. Those were the possibilities they discussed during the opening months of the war in the Pacific, while the Japanese steadily came closer to Australia. What forces were available to meet such an attack on Australia?

The War Cabinet put the question to the Chiefs of Staff, and the replies they received heightened their anxiety. They were told that the naval forces at the disposal of the Australian Government were the Australian cruisers *Adelaide* at Port Moresby, *Canberra* and *Perth* in the Tasman, and *Australia* which was sailing in the direction of Fremantle from South Africa; the armed merchant cruisers *Westralia* and *Manoora* in northern waters, and the destroyer *Vampire* and the armed merchant cruiser *Kanimbla* on the China Station. The Australian destroyers *Stuart, Voyager* and *Vendetta* were refitting at Melbourne, Sydney and Singapore respectively and would be ready between February and April 1942. There were eleven anti-submarine vessels of various shapes and sizes in Sydney and Fremantle to provide escorts for coastal convoys and to protect the

[5] War Cabinet Agendum 418/1941.

approaches to harbours. The New Zealand cruiser *Leander* and armed merchant cruiser *Monowai* (temporarily in dock) would assist in escorting convoys and H.M.N.Z.S. *Achilles* was on the way to Singapore. Shortly before war broke out in the Pacific Australia had lost the cruiser *Sydney* and the sloop *Parramatta* in the war against Germany.

The War Cabinet decided on 11th December, on the recommendation of the Advisory War Council, to ask for the return to the Australia Station of *Hobart,* which was in the Mediterranean, and the sloop *Yarra,* which was in the Persian Gulf. The request for *Hobart* was made at the prompting of the Chief of the Naval Staff, who was then attending naval discussions in Singapore, and the purpose of its return was to act in conjunction with three cruisers from the United States Asiatic Fleet and Dutch and British forces to strengthen the line between Singapore and Darwin.

The War Cabinet was told that the available military strength was composed very largely of the field army of the Australian Military Forces which had been raised under the *Defence Act* for home defence and could not serve outside Australian territory. The main strength of the A.I.F. was overseas, the 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions in the Middle East and most of the 8th Division in Malaya. As arranged in the Singapore staff talks, and at the request of the Netherlands East Indies, 2,510 A.I.F. troops were at once dispatched from Australia to Koepang and Ambon, the force for Koepang including an Independent Company of 250 men to be available for dispatch to Portuguese Timor. In the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, the Solomons and the New Hebrides, with the main strength (2/22nd Battalion) in the Rabaul area, there were 2,158 troops including 1,138 A.I.F.; 30 men of the A.I.F. were serving alongside 1,058 A.M.F. troops at Port Moresby. There was one troop of field artillery at Ocean Island and another at Nauru. An Independent Company of the A.I.F. was to be sent to New Caledonia with the agreement of the French.[6]

If the appreciation furnished by the Chiefs of Staff was correct, one of the most pressing dangers existed in these weakly-garrisoned outlying bases. An estimate of the minimum scale of defence necessary to meet the anticipated scale of attack showed an enormous gulf between needs and capacity to meet them. The Chiefs of Staff said that the defence of Rabaul required "strong balanced naval forces including capital ships and submarines", a brigade group, coastal defences consisting of two 6-inch guns and six 7-inch[7] guns, anti-aircraft defences consisting of fourteen 3-inch guns and four Bofors guns and, in addition, over the whole New Guinea region five squadrons of aircraft, including one fighter squadron. The reality was that at Rabaul there was a full-time strength of about 1,400 men and two 6-inch coastal defence guns and two 3-inch anti-aircraft guns had been installed there. The Chiefs of Staff recommended that the joint United States-Australian proposals for strengthening Rabaul to make it a well-fortified naval base should be given a high

[6] It left Australia on 17th December.
[7] This must have been a mistake in the submission. There was no 7-inch gun. Probably 4.7 was intended.

priority, and, as part of these proposals, the existing garrison should be reinforced to provide an army brigade. An air force general-purpose squadron should also be stationed there.

There remained a threat to the Australian mainland. For the home defence of a continent there were immediately available 132,000 troops of the Australian Military Forces, in camp and on full-time duty. This army was spread thinly around 12,000 miles of the coast from Cairns to Fremantle with little blobs of concentration in the Newcastle-Sydney-Port Kembla area and in Victoria. At Darwin there was a strength of 6,670 including 3,162 of the A.I.F. The order of battle of the A.M.F., excluding first reinforcements, provided for 246,000 troops. After taking an interim decision on the 9th to recall 25,000 trainees into training, the War Cabinet approved on the 11th the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff to call up 114,000 forthwith and to complete the mobilisation later by calling up a further 53,000 including first reinforcements. Five thousand members of the Volunteer Defence Corps[1] were to be called up for aerodrome defence and coastwatching and the maximum use was to be made of women in the services to release men for combatant duty.

It is probable that the value of this home defence force was written down unduly and that it was in fact a much better fighting force than the Government credited it with being.[2] The picture which the War Cabinet had of it in December 1941, however, was of a force limited in training and far below standard in equipment. They were told that the field army of 246,000 had been planned only for defence against "a high scale of raid" and was inadequate for defence against invasion. Moreover, it was not yet a trained army. The equivalent of two cavalry divisions and of four infantry divisions, less one brigade, were reported to have been in camp recently for an average of 90 days and to have carried out some advanced training. Among the rest were those who were still in the recruit stage or had not yet begun training. Its equipment had been rapidly augmented but was still not complete. The War Cabinet was informed that there was sufficient artillery to form 16-gun regiments, but the scale approved by the War Office provided for 24-gun regiments. Anti-tank units would be raised on the scale of 24 guns to a regiment instead of 48. Light machine-guns would be issued at the scale of 38 per battalion instead of 58 and Vickers guns would be used in carriers instead of Bren guns. There were enough rifles for troops in the fighting force but issues to troops in rearward areas would be on a reduced scale. There were still big deficiencies in mechanical transport. There were almost enough cars but less than half of the number of trucks, lorries and trailers required. Out of the estimated requirement of 548 tanks as initial equipment and 420 for six months' reserve there were only 18 on hand, including 8 light tanks described as obsolete. There was less ammunition on hand than required for the order of battle. The number of

[1] See also Section 6 of this chapter.

[2] For discussion of the military value and state of training and equipment of the home defence forces see D. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year* (1959), pp. 29-31, in the Army series of this history.

days of supply for the weapons available was estimated at six days for the anti-tank guns and from five to seven weeks for the major weapons of the field artillery.

Coast defence was reported to be in a considerably better state. Anti-aircraft defence was limited by the lack of guns, only 114 being available out of a requirement of 678 and, although there was enough ammunition to keep the available weapons in action for some months, the supply of further weapons would also reveal ammunition shortages there.

The gravest weaknesses were in the air force. The "first-line aircraft" available were 101 Wirraways, 53 Hudsons, 12 Catalinas and 9 Seagulls; the second-line reserve consisted of 72 Battles, 108 Wirraways and 18 Ansons, and this reserve was deficient in armament. There was a further unclassified reserve of 108 Ansons, also subject to armament deficiencies. There were not enough fully-trained crews to man the "first-line aircraft", the figures for the 101 Wirraways being 45 crews fully trained, 25 crews half-trained and 17 crews quarter-trained; and for the 53 Hudsons, 40 crews fully trained, five crews half-trained and one crew quarter-trained. There was a deficiency of 31 Hudsons to make up the existing squadrons but this was likely to be made up from aircraft under construction. In order to complete the programme for an operational air force of 32 squadrons some hundreds of aircraft were required. It was expected that the 107 Hudsons which were on order from the United States would be delivered steadily month by month until April 1942, and that the delivery of 300 Vultee Vengeance would commence in January 1942, be half-completed before the end of July and be completed in December. Delivery of 54 Beaufighters had been promised by the United Kingdom in monthly quotas from December 1941 to March 1942, and during 1942 the Australian Aircraft Production Commission hoped to deliver 90 Beauforts. There were dimmer prospects for the delivery of amphibians, transport aircraft and Catalinas.

These deficiencies in the existing programme for a force of 32 squadrons became even more alarming against the Chiefs of Staffs' estimate that the minimum scale of defence considered necessary to meet a raid on the mainland of Australia was about 30 first-line squadrons while, to meet an invasion, approximately 60 squadrons would be needed.

The subsequent decisions and actions of the Australian Government can only be understood against this background. As they saw the position, Australia was in great danger and was physically without the means of defending herself unaided. The figures made the outlook seem hopeless when read in conjunction with an appreciation that presented the prospect of an invasion—and Ministers and their advisers spent a lot of time looking at the figures and thinking of invasion. As the weeks passed the war news increased their anxiety. Australian hope had been built on British and United States naval aid, the strength of Singapore and the inner screen of island defences, and on the arrival of promised reinforcements. But then they learnt that five battleships of the United States Pacific Fleet had been knocked out at Pearl Harbour; and that two British

battleships, the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse,* had been sunk off the Malayan coast. The Japanese Army was advancing steadily down the Malay Peninsula towards Singapore. In these circumstances the Australian Government cried aloud for reinforcement, for supplies and the diversion of more Allied resources to the Far East.

In disposing of such forces as were available to it, the Government gave special attention to Rabaul and Darwin and to the vital coal and steel area of Newcastle-Sydney-Lithgow-Port Kembla. On 12th December it was decided to evacuate women and children, other than missionaries and nurses, from New Guinea and Papua.[3] In the light of a supplementary report from the Chiefs of Staff and on the recommendation of the Advisory War Council, the War Cabinet decided on 18th December to increase the military garrison at Port Moresby to one brigade group and that, on threat of an attack, the air forces should be reinforced to the capacity of the operational aerodrome. The reinforcement of Rabaul was to be constantly reviewed in the light of the naval situation. The defence of New Caledonia was to be kept under review so that, when existing priorities were completed, a garrison should be sent there if the situation had not changed for the worse. The retention of Suva as a fleet base was of first importance to Australia and therefore the Australian Government should offer to assist New Zealand, who was primarily responsible for its defence, to strengthen its garrison.[4]

In response to requests by the Commander-in-Chief Far East, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, the War Cabinet decided on 22nd December that 400 men of the Australian Armoured Division be sent to Malaya to man light tanks from India, but it did so on condition that the tanks would be available for them on arrival, that the men should be used in the role for which they were trained, and that the other measures recommended for strengthening the defences of Malaya were taken. In the final outcome, the Australian Armoured Division personnel were not sent, as the United Kingdom decided to transfer two armoured regiments and 25 light tanks with crews from the Middle East to Malaya.[5] The War Cabinet also decided to send 1,800 reinforcements for the maintenance of the A.I.F., already in Malaya.[6] Next day, in response to representations from the G.O.C., A.I.F. Malaya, Major-General Gordon Bennett,[7] it was decided to send to Malaya an A.I.F. machine-gun battalion stationed at Darwin, replacing it there by units of the Australian Military Forces.[8] All these measures were taken after consultation with the Advisory War Council and on its recommendation.

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[3] War Cabinet Minute 1578, 12 Dec 1941.

[4] War Cabinet Minute 1586 and Advisory War Council Minute 599, 18 Dec. For details of military measures taken for the defence of Australia, see McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year.*

[5] Telegram from Dominions Office, 2 Jan 1942 and Advisory War Council Minute 645, 5 Jan 1942.

[6] War Cabinet Minute 1609, 22 Dec 1941.

[7] Lt-Gen H. Gordon Bennett, CB, CMG, DSO, VD. GOC 8 Div 1940-42, III Corps 1942-44. Public accountant and company director; of Sydney; b. Balwyn, Vic, 16 Apr 1887. Died 1 Aug 1962.

[8] War Cabinet Minute 1629, 23 Dec 1941.

On 11th December the War Cabinet approved in principle a recommendation that the expansion of the R.A.A.F. to 60 squadrons be initiated immediately, recognising, however, that their decision was subject to the practical difficulties of giving effect to the proposal. They also made decisions intended to accelerate aerodrome construction. Directions were given and new priorities established to accelerate Australian production of munitions and weapons and various works. Munitions being made in Australia for export but urgently required for home defence should be retained in Australia. Particular attention was given to aircraft production. On 18th December there were long and critical discussions in both the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council on aircraft production policy in Australia and the administrative machinery for the direction of the aircraft industry. The starting-point was the urgent need for aircraft and the fact that the successive promises for the production of Beauforts had dwindled from early estimates of 176 by the end of December 1941, to an estimate of eleven. The closing point was a decision to abolish the Aircraft Production Commission, appoint the Director-General of Munitions, Mr Essington Lewis, to the additional post of Director-General of Aircraft Production, with full powers for the purpose, and to appoint a general manager for Beaufort production with the immediate aim of producing 90 Beauforts by the end of June 1942. The basic flaw in aircraft production would appear to have been the form of organisation adopted, for the commission had been attempting to be both a manufacturing body and the coordinator and controller of the whole industry.[9] It was also decided that the production of Wirraways, which was expected to reach a total of 500 by the end of December, should continue.[1] Directions were given to accelerate the construction of the battleship dock at Sydney.

To obtain the militia strength authorised by the War Cabinet it was decided to call up for home defence all men between 35 and 45 years of age who were unmarried or widowers without children, all married men and widowers with children between 18 and 35 and all youths reaching the age of 18 years in 1941. Regarding the 18-year-olds there was some hesitation, but after further consultation between Mr Curtin and the Minister for the Army, Mr Forde, the need was found inescapable. Under previous proclamations all unmarried men or childless widowers between 18 and 35 years of age had been called up but this class had not yielded sufficient strength to maintain the militia owing to the large number of exemptions for one reason or another, including the reserved occupations list, and the voluntary enlistment of trainees for service overseas.[2]

By the beginning of January 1942, there were 205,431 men of the Australian Military Forces in camp or on full-time duty, comprising 4,461 in the Permanent Forces, 184,821 in the Citizen Forces and 16,149 in the garrison battalions. There were another 14,717 men not on full-time

[9] War Cabinet Minute 1584 and Advisory War Council Minute 614, 18 Dec 1941; also War Cabinet Minute 1478, 6 Nov 1941.

[1] See S. J. Butlin, *War Economy 1939-1942* (1955), and D. P. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry* (1958), in this series.

[2] War Cabinet Minute 1577, 11 Dec 1941, Agendum 419/1941.

duty. Of the A.I.F. 120,945 were serving overseas and 37,543 serving in Australia.[3]

The recruitment of an additional 500 women for the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force and 1,600 for the Australian Women's Army Service was promptly approved and a direction given that the maximum use should be made of women in the services to release men for combatant duty.

In mid-December the War Cabinet directed that no further trainees under the Empire Air Training Scheme were to be sent abroad until the relation of the scheme to the new problem confronting Australia had been examined.[4] After two months of uncertainty, however, it was eventually decided that Australia should continue to provide her agreed quota of aircrew, subject to modification of the Empire Air Training Scheme to allow an increased percentage of the men to receive advanced training in Australia, extended facilities and the necessary aircraft being provided for that purpose; to the retention in Australia of sufficient aircrew, trained in Australia, to fill the establishment of Australian squadrons serving at home and abroad; and to the arranging of a regulated inward flow of Australian aircrew with war experience to provide a nucleus of experienced men in all R.A.A.F. units based in Australia. It was also decided to ask that as many other Australians as possible should be allotted to service in the Pacific theatre.[5]

It was decided to curtail transport services and cut out all special holiday services by road or rail in order to save coal, power, fuel, equipment and manpower and also to avoid the risk of having large numbers of people away from their homes in a serious emergency.[6] Steps were taken to conserve electric power by prohibiting shop window displays, advertising signs, night tennis and night greyhound racing. Further petrol cuts were made and the use of tinplate, flax, raw cotton and other essential materials was restricted.[7]

4—THE CLAIM FOR REINFORCEMENTS

From the beginning of the war in the Pacific, however, Australia realised that the limits of her own manpower and the gaps in her own defences and munitions industry meant that she must look for substantial aid from overseas. The reinforcement of Australia in case of attack had been one of the assumptions on which war plans had hitherto been made.

Throughout December the Australian Government became increasingly worried and then alarmed at what appeared to it to be complacency and sometimes disregard of the dangers in this theatre and an inability to appreciate fully Australia's claims for reinforcements and supplies. Already,

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[3] War Cabinet Agendum 13/1942, 10 Jan 1942.

[4] War Cabinet Minute 1588, 18 Dec 1941.

[5] War Cabinet Minute 1919, 24 Feb 1942 on Agendum 440/1941, Supplement No. 2. See D. Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942* (1962), in the Air series of this history, for a fuller account.

[6] War Cabinet Minute 1583 of 12 Dec on Agendum 421/1941.

[7] War Cabinet Minute 1559 of 11 Dec. For fuller information on restrictions see Section 6 of this chapter.

direct experience of war in North Africa, Greece and Crete had made familiar to Australians the tragic cry of not enough men, not enough aircraft, not enough armoured fighting vehicles, not enough weapons. As the war news became worse, it seemed that the same tragedy was to be repeated nearer home. The Government read its official information to mean that while 30 and more divisions were standing to arms in the British Isles, a mere handful of British divisions were scattered at widely separated points in three continents. Ministers, who, in the absence of any other aid, had looked so hopefully towards the strength of America to redress the overwhelming weight of the prospective enemy in the Pacific, and, less surely but nevertheless hopefully, to the restraining influence which the Far Eastern army of the Soviet Union might exert on Japan, found themselves within a few weeks of Pearl Harbour beginning to doubt whether either of these hopes would be realised and to fear that Australia would be left alone, in the path of Japan, with the best of her own army fighting Allied battles in other parts of the world.

In reply to their first request for a general review of the new war situation, the Australian Government was informed on 12th December by the Dominions Office that it was not considered likely that there would be any immediate large-scale threat to the territory of Australia, much less New Zealand. The Dominions Office quoted the Far East appreciation which had been given in August 1940, envisaging the possibility of nothing more than raids by enemy cruisers and seaborne aircraft, and said that for the present they did not recommend any changes in the dispositions for local Australian defence from those which had been discussed in London with Mr Menzies in April 1941.[8]

It may have been unreasonable for Australia to expect an immediate reassessment of the situation in four days, but the United Kingdom helped to create misunderstanding and doubt of its own good faith when, after Japan had attacked successfully, damaging severely both the American and British naval forces, the Dominions Office answered Australian questions by referring to an appreciation made 16 months earlier at a time when the Australian Government was facing the decision whether to send more divisions of the A.I.F. to the Middle East or keep them for home defence.

On 13th December the United Kingdom Government sent to Australia a report prepared by its military advisers on the methods likely to be adopted by Japan. The enemy's first objectives were considered to be Malaya, the Philippines and Hong Kong. There might also be a repetition of air attacks on Hawaii. Other operations, which might be carried out simultaneously with or independently of the main moves, were attacks on the Dutch base at Surabaya; attacks on the Panama Canal; the occupation of the Pacific islands on the Equator, such as Canton Island, in order to cut the Pacific air route; raids by cruisers and minelayers on ports and their approaches in the Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand and India; and attacks on shipping in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. A remote

[8] Telegram from Dominions Office, 11 Dec.

possibility was the acquisition of a refuelling base in Madagascar. Developing from the main operations, Japan might attempt to seize key points in the Netherlands East Indies.[9]

At the same time as they sought to learn how the British viewed the prospects in the Far East, the Australian Government asked that the air forces in the Australian area be strengthened. In a telegram to the Dominions Office on 11th December, Australian air strength was reviewed in detail and it was pointed out that the Royal Australian Air Force was responsible for maintaining outer reconnaissance and striking force capacity over an area stretching from New Zealand through New Caledonia, New Hebrides, Solomons, New Guinea to the Netherlands East Indies; and inner reconnaissance around Australia, primarily the Arafura, Coral and Tasman Seas and the south-west approaches to Fremantle. They could have given point to their case by comparing the area for which they were responsible to the whole of the continent of Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East, or to the whole of the United States, central America and the West Indies. To discharge this responsibility the R.A.A.F. had 12 Catalinas, 53 Hudsons and 101 Wirraways. A second-line striking force might be formed of a number of aircraft, not fully armed, from training schools. Twenty-four of the Hudsons were being sent to help defend the Netherlands East Indies. Another consignment of 39 Hudsons had just arrived in Australia from the makers but were without armament and turrets.

There were two main reasons for Australia's weakness. The first was that the aircraft which Australia had ordered from overseas to meet immediate requirements had not been delivered. Australia was still awaiting delivery of about 500 aircraft for which orders had been placed. The second was that Australia had contributed men and machines to other theatres. In addition to the two squadrons in the Netherlands East Indies, Australia had provided three squadrons for Malaya, one squadron for the United Kingdom and one for the Middle East. Since the institution of the Empire Air Scheme 6,742 aircrew personnel and 2,294 ground staff had left Australia for the Royal Air Force.[1]

Australia asked that the assurance given to Menzies in April should be carried out and that an immediate review of air resources should be made with a view to their redisposition to meet the dangers of all fronts. In lieu of the return of the R.A.A.F. squadrons from overseas, 9 Catalinas and 18 long-range bombers should be allocated to the defence of Australia.

On 17th December the United Kingdom, replying to the Australian representations of 11th December, said that, pending completion of discussions with the United States and regional conferences at Moscow, Chungking and Singapore, "immediate reinforcements" had been sent to the Far East in the shape of 12 Blenheim IV bombers from the Middle East. It was also hoped to send 4 Catalinas and 52 Hudsons, as well as

[9] Advisory War Council Agendum 145/1941, 18 Dec.
[1] Telegram to Dominions Office, 11 Dec 1941, and War Cabinet Minute 1564, 11 Dec.

strengthening air forces in India and Burma. It was expected to ship 12 Beaufighters to Australia during December and 14 a month during January, February and March.[2]

Beyond the needs of the Australian area was the urgent and related need to strengthen the Malayan and Indonesian barrier. On 16th December the Advisory War Council heard from the Chief of the Naval Staff an account of his discussions in Singapore with the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, on 6th and 7th December regarding naval dispositions. These discussions had taken place with a full knowledge of the views held by the United States, for the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, had just returned from a conference at Manila with the Commander-in-Chief, United States Asiatic Fleet. The main proposal directly affecting Australia was to strengthen the Malay barrier between Singapore and Darwin. For this purpose the United States would provide one 8-inch cruiser, two 6-inch cruisers and four destroyers; the Netherlands would provide one and later two cruisers and Australia would provide one 6-inch cruiser, *Hobart,* which the United Kingdom had agreed should return to the Australia Station.

The Chief of the Naval Staff also gave the council details of the loss of the battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse,* including in his account further evidence of the ineffectiveness of the air organisation in Malaya. The council's discussions turned chiefly on this point. Reference was made to the frequent representations by Australia regarding the need to strengthen the air defence of Malaya and the council recommended that the Government should again emphasise this need and urge the vital importance of providing aircraft carriers east of Suez. If carriers could not be provided by the United Kingdom the United States should be asked to make one available.[3] A cablegram embodying these recommendations was sent by Mr Curtin to the British Prime Minister, Mr Churchill, on 17th December.

In the same week the Australian Government received disturbing reports both from the Australian Government Representative in Singapore, Mr Bowden,[4] and from the G.O.C., A.I.F. Malaya, Major-General Gordon Bennett, regarding the situation there, the unpreparedness of anti-aircraft defences, the inadequacy of air support, and the urgent need for reinforcements.

Under arrangements initiated by President Roosevelt, an inter-Allied regional military conference to prepare the way for common action against common enemies was held at Singapore on 18th December. The United Kingdom, United States, Australia and the Netherlands attended. China did not reply to the invitation and New Zealand was represented by proxy. Australia was represented by General Bennett, assisted by Captain

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[2] Telegram from Dominions Office, 17 Dec 1941.

[3] Advisory War Council Minute 597, 16 Dec 1941.

[4] V. G. Bowden, CBE. (1915-18: Major, Royal Engineers.) Aust Govt Commissioner in China 1935-41; Aust Govt Representative in Singapore 1941-42. B. Sydney, 28 May 1884. Executed by Japanese 17 Feb 1942.

Collins[5] and Group Captain McCauley[6] as naval and air representatives respectively.[7]

The conference readily agreed on the importance of Singapore and the Philippines and on plans for disposing Allied forces so as to hold both. The urgent and immediate need was for reinforcements. They also agreed that the plans must include, in addition to Malaya, the East Indies and Philippines, the sea lines of communication across the Indian Ocean, from Australia to the northern islands, and across the Pacific to the Americas. It was desirable that China should maintain maximum pressure on Japan to contain as many Japanese divisions as possible and subsequently to provide bases for long-distance bombing attacks on Japan. Any effort by Russia to serve the same objectives would be of the utmost value. The situation was serious but need not be viewed pessimistically provided the necessary reinforcements were supplied in time. Time was the essential factor.

The particular recommendations of the conference mainly concerned the method by which reinforcements might be passed to Malaya and the Philippines and, in this connection, the main importance of Australia was that she provided a stage in the route by which American reinforcements might reach these vital areas.[8]

Meanwhile the campaign in Malaya was going badly. Bennett reported on 19th December that the situation was grave and asked for the dispatch of an Australian division from the Middle East. Next day the Australian Government received the substance of a report Wavell had made to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London stressing the seriousness of the outlook. Curtin at once sent a direct personal message to Churchill asking to be told precisely what was Wavell's assessment of the situation in Malaya and his capacity to meet it. Now that the actual threat had come and the enemy was making substantial progress on several fronts, the situation must be met boldly and not by "penny packet" dispositions.

At this point the centre of interest moves to Washington, where Churchill and Roosevelt met on 22nd December for a series of conferences on the future conduct of the war.[9] The full effect of the decisions made at those conferences was not known in Australia until months later, and during the currency of the talks the Australian Government saw Washington chiefly as the place where it would be most useful for the time being to make their case for the reinforcement of the Far East.

As will appear later, the Washington talks had perhaps their lasting significance in inaugurating a series of arrangements regarding the higher direction of the war, but for the moment attention will be directed only

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[5] Vice-Admiral Sir John Collins, KBE, CB; RAN. Comd HMAS *Sydney* 1939-41, British naval forces in ABDA Area 1942, HMAS *Shropshire* 1943-44, Aust Squadron 1944 and 1945-46; Chief of the Naval Staff 1948-55. B. Deloraine, Tas, 7 Jan 1899.

[6] Air Marshal Sir John McCauley, KBE, CB. Comd RAAF Far East 1941-42; Deputy Chief of the Air Staff 1942-44; Chief of Staff BCOF 1947-49; Chief of the Air Staff 1954-57. Regular air force officer; b. Sydney, 18 Mar 1899.

[7] Telegram to Dominions Office, 15 Dec 1941, and Advisory War Council Minute 608, 18 Dec.

[8] Advisory War Council Agendum 149/1941, 22 Dec, enclosing telegrams (2) from Dominions Office of 21 Dec.

[9] See W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War,* Vol III (Aust edition 1950), pp. 572-618.

to the way in which the Australian Government attempted to use the occasion to bring home to both Great Britain and the United States the danger in the Far East and to obtain military aid for that theatre of war. Other aspects of the discussions at Washington are dealt with below.

On 23rd December the Advisory War Council, after discussing a report from Mr R. G. Casey, the Australian Minister to the United States, that the talks were to take place, recommended that messages be sent to Roosevelt and Churchill to the following effect:

(*a*) The loss of Singapore would mean the isolation of the Philippines, the fall of the Netherlands East Indies and the isolation of Australia by severance of communications in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
(*b*) The setback would be as serious to United States interests as to Australian interests.
(*c*) The reinforcements earmarked by the United Kingdom for dispatch to Malaya are inadequate. The amount of resistance to Japan in Malaya will depend directly on the amount of assistance provided by the United Kingdom and United States Governments.
(*d*) If Australia is to remain a base of increasing importance, it is essential that Singapore be reinforced. The urgency of providing such reinforcements is to be stressed.[1]

In conveying these views to Roosevelt and Churchill, Curtin asked them to consider the position in Malaya as of the greatest urgency. It was evident that in north Malaya the Japanese had assumed control of air and sea. Unless the British Army were provided with air support there would be a repetition of Greece and Crete, and Singapore would be grievously threatened. Small reinforcements would be of little avail. Australia had sent three divisions to the Middle East and great quantities of supplies to Britain, the Middle East and India and many of her airmen were fighting in Britain and the Middle East or training in Canada. Hence her own resources were very limited. Resistance in Malaya must depend on the assistance sent by the United Kingdom and the United States.[2]

The representations by the Prime Minister were backed up by the activities of Casey in Washington, in interviews both with Churchill and Roosevelt and with their Chiefs of Staff. Casey reported that they realised the menace to Singapore. Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff agreed that the security of Singapore was of greater importance than that of any place outside the United Kingdom. They just did not know where they could obtain air reinforcements for Malaya in reasonable time. There were no modern aircraft in India. Fighter aircraft could not be flown from the Middle East into Malaya owing to Japanese control of southern Burma and northern Malaya. There was no British aircraft carrier which could get fighter aircraft into Malaya under a month. The Americans could not be induced to take the risk of sending one of their few aircraft carriers from Honolulu to Singapore or even to Australia and if they did it would take fourteen days to arrive. Moreover, so long as they could do so,

[1] Telegram from Casey, 18 Dec; Advisory War Council Minute 623, 23 Dec 1941.
[2] Telegram to Casey, 23 Dec 1941.

anything the Americans could spare would be flown to the Philippines. A proposal to send four Hurricane squadrons in an aircraft carrier from the Middle East was largely a naval question whether the carrier could be defended on such a voyage.

Coming down to details Casey also reported that 51 Hurricane fighters would be due in Singapore about 8th January. One Blenheim squadron flying from the United Kingdom via the Middle East would arrive early in January; 52 more Hudsons should arrive by the end of January. A brigade group from the 18th British Division and the leading brigade of the 17th Indian Division should arrive about 8th January. General Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief Middle East, was to be asked if he could spare four Hurricane squadrons to be embarked on the aircraft carrier *Indomitable*. If so these fighters could reach Singapore (minus ground staff and spares) about 27th January. American ships passing Durban for the Middle East should be stopped and fighter aircraft taken out—about 10 Kittyhawks per ship—to make up a shipment for Singapore.[3]

Meanwhile Australia had received from the United Kingdom a summary of the appreciation made by the Chiefs of Staff and the conclusions reached by the Defence Committee of the British War Cabinet after a preliminary examination of the situation created by the Japanese attack. The full report by the Defence Committee had been sent to Washington for use by Churchill in his talks with Roosevelt.

This appreciation said that future British naval strategy must ensure sea communications in the Atlantic first, those in the Indian Ocean second. Limited United States naval support could be expected in the Atlantic and from the United States Asiatic Fleet but could not be expected elsewhere. There was not one base which both the British and the Americans would find acceptable for the assembling of joint forces equal or superior to the Japanese. Great Britain could not provide a balanced fleet at Singapore at once and moreover there was no fighter protection for a fleet at Singapore. Therefore it would be unsound to send capital ships to that base at present. Pending the assembling of a fleet in the Indian Ocean, raiding by Japanese on ships in that sea must be expected, but, until the Japanese secured Borneo or an area to the south for the establishment of shore bases for aircraft, escorted convoys should be able to reach Singapore through Sunda Strait. The British objective in the Far East must be to hold Burma (particularly Rangoon and the Irrawaddy basin), Ceylon and other naval and air bases, Singapore Island and southern Malaya, Java and southern Sumatra, and Timor. The importance of Burma both for the immediate need of defence and for the eventual purpose of mounting an offensive was underlined. Burma also contained the only effective lines of communication with China, whose continued resistance was considered to be of great value. The position in Malaya was recognised as very serious, for there was no balanced fleet in Eastern waters and the Allied air and land forces were heavily outnumbered. It was of the greatest

[3] Telegram from Casey, 25 Dec 1941.

importance to hold Singapore. The Japanese advance must be disputed inch by inch. The Commander-in-Chief designate, Far East, Lieut-General Sir Henry Pownall,[5] had been told that nothing compared in importance with Singapore, which must be held at all costs. If, in spite of their efforts, they were forced out of Malaya, they must make every effort to hold the other essential points in the East Indies for they were a barrier to the Indian Ocean and Australia. United States and Chinese cooperation and aid were considered essential and it would not be sufficient for the United States to maintain a defensive attitude.

Looking towards the time when the Allies might take the offensive, the appreciation spoke of the need to assemble in the Indian Ocean a fleet of nine capital ships and four aircraft carriers, and to do this capital ships would have to be withdrawn from the eastern Mediterranean. This could not be done if Britain maintained air forces in Malta and Cyrenaica to cooperate with submarines in such strength as to keep the Italian heavy ships away from the British supply routes. The Far East and Middle East were interdependent and the grip on either of them could not be relaxed unless, in the last resort, the security of the United Kingdom or the Dominions demanded it.

Among the conclusions of special interest to Australia were that unified direction and closest coordination of all Allied forces should be secured as soon as possible; Singapore and Manila must be held and the Sunda Strait route kept open; reinforcements must be rushed to Malaya and Burma as soon as possible. Singapore and Manila were considered to be the immediate objects of Japanese action in order to gain complete control and freedom of movement in that area. The possibility of raids by cruisers on the Pacific Islands, Australia, New Zealand and India, and attacks on shipping in the Pacific and Indian Oceans was envisaged among various operations which might be carried out simultaneously or independently of the main operation.[6]

A telegram from Bruce, the Australian High Commissioner, on 24th December reviewed this statement by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff Committee and expressed the opinion that there was a lack of appreciation of the urgency of providing the immediate requirements, particularly air reinforcements, asked for by Singapore. The 50 fighters, he pointed out, would only complete existing squadrons and their reserves and not provide the extra squadrons needed. The fighters would go by ship. Only two of the four squadrons of bombers requested were being provided and, as there were 800 aircraft in the Middle East, it was difficult to believe that two more squadrons could not be flown out from there. Bruce had been urging too that, in view of possible developments in the Far East, air reinforcements should flow, as far as practicable, through Australia so that, in the light of developments, they could be passed on to Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies or the Philippines or retained in Australia.[7]

[5] Pownall replaced Brooke-Popham on 27th December 1941.

[6] Telegrams (2) from Sir Earle Page, 20 Dec, and telegram from Dominions Office, 23 Dec 1941; also War Cabinet Agendum 445/1941.

[7] Telegram from Bruce, 24 Dec 1941.

Bruce's analysis and suggestions clearly influenced a message sent to Casey in Washington on 26th December giving Australian opinion on the Chiefs of Staffs' paper, together with instructions to convey the Australian Government's views to Churchill.

> Please understand that the stage of gentle suggestion has now passed (the Australian Government said). Continuous over-statements by British Far East Commands as to the degree of preparedness have produced a very serious effect upon public opinion. Latest reports from Malaya suggest that fighters will not support A.I.F. troops in the field because they have to be withdrawn for the defence of the fortress itself. This will re-echo experiences of Greece and Crete and must be avoided. You say that Churchill will confirm the proposals mentioned to you and already known to us. Much more is required. Please take immediate steps to inform him that the requirements of the Singapore Conference are only the very minimum; that anything less will be dangerous and that a definite time-table is required. . . . This is the gravest type of emergency and everything will depend upon a Churchill-Roosevelt decision to meet it in the broadest way.[8]

The views of the Australian Chiefs of Staff, to whom the appreciation of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff had been referred, was that the situation disclosed was "most unsatisfactory". Australia had based great hopes on the United States Pacific Fleet and now it seemed that it was "unable or unwilling to assist". The British intention of forming a separate fleet in the Indian Ocean was unsound. It would be better for Britain to send her capital ships to help raise the strength of the United States Pacific Fleet, so as to make it decisively superior to the Japanese and so that it could attack the Japanese mandated islands, defeat the Japanese Fleet and regain control of the sea. Such offensive action would provide a more effective protection to Australia than the presence in the Indian Ocean of a British force in peril to the Japanese main fleet. In order to form a fleet which would be a match for the Japanese the British Commonwealth must accept a temporary reduction in naval protection of its interests in the Indian Ocean. If such a junction of forces were made in the Pacific, the British forces required would not be so large as to denude other important theatres of war. Without such a combined fleet, the Allies would remain on the defensive and would be in grave danger of being defeated point by point. To assemble a balanced and decisively superior fleet should be their main objective and, if concentration upon doing this involved the temporary loss of subsidiary interests, such risks should be accepted. A decisive victory would render any enemy successes in the meantime worthless to him.

These views were endorsed by the Australian War Cabinet on 30th December and sent off to Churchill in Washington.[9]

Next day the papers were submitted to the Advisory War Council, which expressed "great concern" at the British view and "strongly agreed" with the views of the Chiefs of Staff that an Allied fleet superior to the Japanese should be concentrated with a view to forcing a decisive action.

There is no clear evidence that the Australian views as such had any

[8] Telegram to Casey, 26 Dec 1941.
[9] War Cabinet Minute 1632, 30 Dec; Agendum 445/1941. Telegram to Casey, 30 Dec 1941.

effective influence on decisions made at Washington by Churchill and Roosevelt on the grand strategy. The communications received by the Government from Churchill and Roosevelt, in reply to their representations, were limited to assurances about reinforcements for Australia and to an account of the decisions the two leaders had made for a unified command and the higher direction of the war. Both pieces of information left Australia dissatisfied.

The steps taken by Churchill to send reinforcements were summarised by him in a telegram to Curtin on 27th December from Washington. He assured Curtin that he would do everything possible to strengthen the whole front from Rangoon to Darwin. The 18th British Division, which was rounding the Cape when war with Japan broke out, had been diverted to Bombay and Ceylon and the leading brigade was going direct to Singapore. The movement of the 17th Indian Division from India to Persia had been cancelled and this division was going to Malaya. He had suggested to London on the 20th, when en route from London to Washington, that the Australian Government should recall one division of the A.I.F. from Palestine, either to go to India to relieve other troops or to go direct to Singapore. Some air support was already on the way.

Churchill, however, still argued that the needs of Malaya were not pre-eminent but had to be balanced against the needs of other fronts. Although he spoke of the "paramount importance of Singapore", he also said that it would not be wise to loosen the grip on Rommel in North Africa when victory was within the Allied grasp. His view of the general strategy in Malaya was that forces should not be used up in attempting to defend the northern front of the peninsula but should fall back, fighting delaying actions and destroying communications so that they could defend Singapore and its approaches in Johore. He thought of Singapore as a fortress.

On the completion of the Washington talks, Roosevelt sent to Curtin, through Casey, a message in reply to Curtin's of 23rd December. He assured Curtin that urgent consideration had been given to the matter of dispatching reinforcements at the earliest possible moment. The most definite passage in the message was "the necessary steps are already under way for flight to Australia of effective air assistance which I hope will arrive in the very near future".[1]

The result of the talks was summed up more concretely from London. It had been decided that the main reinforcements necessary, including those en route to Malaya, were two divisions and one armoured brigade to Malaya, and two divisions to the Netherlands East Indies; three heavy anti-aircraft regiments and five light anti-aircraft regiments; reinforcements to bring the total air strength in Malaya up to eight light bomber squadrons, eight fighter squadrons, two torpedo bomber squadrons and half of one general-reconnaissance (land plane) squadron. The United States was also being urged to recognise the importance of re-equipping, maintaining

[1] Telegram from Casey, 2 Jan 1942.

and expanding the Dutch air forces. Additional measures were being taken for the reinforcement of Burma. The rate of reinforcement would depend on shipping and naval escorts but it was hoped that the programme could be completed within four months.[2]

To the Australian Government it appeared that these reinforcements were inadequate and would be likely to arrive too late. In an exchange of telegrams between Curtin and Churchill firmness verged on sharpness with each other. It was evident that Churchill had full confidence that Singapore could be held as a fortress and that he was also inclined to underestimate the Japanese soldier. On the 14th, after speaking of reinforcements on the way, he found ground for hoping that a counter-stroke against the Japanese would be possible in the latter part of February.[3]

Australia was disappointed, too, in the response to some rather modest requests to the United Kingdom for the urgent allotment of Bofors guns, radio direction-finding equipment and aerial torpedoes from the United Kingdom. Apart from the diversion of 24 Bofors guns, all that Australia was to receive was a small percentage of current production. The Government felt that there was a marked lack of appreciation of the seriousness of the situation confronting Australia. That situation surely warranted an allocation from existing stocks. "It appears to us," the Government said in directing Sir Earle Page, its Special Representative in London, to approach the United Kingdom Government again, "that we are in greater danger of early invasion than is the United Kingdom and that this consideration should induce some diversion of equipment at present retained for the defence of the United Kingdom. In view of our extremely limited resources in aircraft it is imperative our means of interception and combating attack should be materially augmented by the provision of other equipment."[4]

The measures decided upon by Roosevelt and Churchill at Washington to reinforce Malaya required the transfer from the Middle East of two divisions of the A.I.F. Because of the relationship of this question both to the holding of Malaya and ultimately the deliverance of Australia from the fear of invasion, it is necessary here to disentangle some of the events surrounding the original decision for the transfer of these troops from one theatre to another. The original decision was made, not at the instance of the Australian Government, but at the instance of Churchill. It was made with the purpose of reinforcing Malaya and not to garrison Australia.

Shortly after its assumption of office, the Curtin Government affirmed the decisions taken in September by its predecessor, the Fadden Government, that, in the light of the manpower situation, it was beyond Australia's capacity to maintain the A.I.F. at four divisions and one armoured division. Part of the proposal then accepted was that, if the situation in the Far East permitted, the armoured division would be completed in

[2] Telegram from Dominions Office, 3 Jan 1942.
[3] Telegrams Winch 7 and 8 and Johcu 16 and 17.
[4] Telegram to Page, 24 Jan 1942.

the Middle East by conversion of existing A.I.F. units, and the A.I.F. would then be composed of a corps of two infantry divisions, an armoured division and an army tank brigade in the Middle East, a division in Malaya, and various independent companies, railway and forestry units.[5] On 18th November the Minister for the Army announced that the armoured division would go overseas as soon as it was equipped.[6]

General Sir Thomas Blamey, the Commander of the A.I.F. in the Middle East, however, objected strongly to having one of his divisions cut up and made representations, the effect of which was that there should still be three infantry divisions in the Middle East, and that Australia should not provide the army tank brigade for the Middle East as the British had requested but should raise the armoured division partly in Australia and partly from divisions already available in the Middle East. His arguments were that the disbandment or conversion of units with honourable war records would damage morale; that there was no need for the A.I.F. to provide an army tank brigade as there were considerable heavy tank units in the Middle East, a likelihood that the supply of tanks would be retarded, and no guarantee that an army tank brigade would necessarily be employed in the Australian Corps; that the estimated scale of reinforcements was too high, and that there was a considerable pool of reinforcements in the Middle East.

Blamey's views and the presentation of them in an agendum prepared for the War Cabinet on 18th November were wholly directed to a situation caused by lack of volunteers and to the desirability of maintaining an undiminished corps of three divisions, with possibly the addition of an armoured division in the Middle East. When the matter eventually came before the War Cabinet on 26th November, when Blamey was present, the same considerations were predominant. It was decided not to provide personnel for an army tank brigade, to complete the armoured division of the A.I.F. by raising new units in Australia and by the reallotment of existing non-divisional units and from reinforcements in the Middle East; and to defer for the present any reduction in the existing commitment in respect of infantry divisions in the Middle East. The minute concluded: "Middle East commitments will need to be reviewed when the armoured division proceeds overseas in the light of conditions then prevailing."[7]

At that time, when indeed the Australian Government still had lingering hope that current discussions with Japan would maintain peace, there was no indication that the Australian Government or its generals had any thought of calling home the A.I.F. At the end of November Blamey returned to the Middle East.

A month later, on 24th December, the Minister for the Army prepared a further submission for the War Cabinet on the future policy for the A.I.F. in the light of the changed situation in the Far East, and this, too, gave

[5] War Cabinet Minute 1406, 15 Oct 1941 on Agendum 197/1941, Supplement 3.
[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 7, p. 11.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 1520 on Agendum 197/1941, Supplement No. 4, endorsed by Advisory War Council Minute 567, 26 Nov 1941.

no indication of any thought of the return of the A.I.F. He recalled that when the decisions were taken in November "the governing factor was the difficulty of obtaining sufficient volunteers" but since the beginning of hostilities with Japan the indications were that there would be no lack of volunteers. "The main problem now," he said, "is the availability of shipping and the provision of naval escorts for maintenance of overseas commitments." In a review of the situation he said that there were 16,600 effective reinforcements in the Middle East after completing units to war establishment and there was no immediate need for the dispatch of further reinforcements. It was considered, however, that reinforcements in the Middle East should be maintained at a minimum figure of 11,000 and that, when it was evident that the A.I.F. in the Middle East were to be employed in active operations, the dispatch of additional reinforcements could be considered in the light of the situation then prevailing. In the same submission proposals were made for the reinforcement of Malaya by dispatching 1,800 men to bring the total reinforcement pool to 4,000, and by sending a machine-gun battalion there.

The absence at that stage of any Australian intention to bring back troops from the Middle East was further indicated by the approval of this submission by the War Cabinet on 30th December. At the same meeting Curtin referred to a cablegram dated 27th December from Churchill in which the British Prime Minister mentioned that a week earlier he had suggested that one Australian division be recalled from Palestine either to go to India or to Singapore. No information regarding this proposal had been received from London beyond a reference in a cablegram from Bruce on 26th December. Curtin added that he did not favour sending A.I.F. troops to India.

The War Cabinet decided to ask Bruce to ascertain definitely what was proposed regarding the transfer of any A.I.F. division from the Middle East, and in relation to any such proposal to submit information as to dates of movement and arrangements for transport and escort.[8]

The telegram of 26th December from Bruce, to which Curtin had made passing reference, had mentioned a proposal, additional to the measures affecting the 18th British Division and the 17th Indian Division, to send two divisions from the Middle East to the Far East, possibly for service in Sumatra but to serve in accordance with the requirements of the situation at the time of their arrival. The alternatives were to send two Australian divisions or to send one Australian and one Indian division. The proposal was linked with suggestions to reinforce the Middle East with American divisions, which would release the more highly-trained and seasoned troops for the Far East.[9]

In saying that this was his only information, Curtin had apparently overlooked a report by Page, summarising a discussion by the Defence Committee of the British War Cabinet on the night of 19th December on

[8] War Cabinet Minute 1636, 30 Dec 1941, on Agendum 197/1941, Supplement No. 5. Telegrams from Churchill, 27 Dec, from Bruce, 26 Dec 1941.

[9] Telegram from Bruce, 26 Dec 1941.

an appreciation by the British Chiefs of Staff. Page said that, after the immediate reinforcement of Malaya by an Indian division, "further measures contemplated if the situation warrants it" were the dispatch of one Australian division from Palestine, another infantry division from the United Kingdom and an examination of the possibility of the United States sending divisions to relieve British units in Northern Ireland.[1]

In response to the inquiry from the Australian War Cabinet, Bruce further reported that the Chiefs of Staff were working on the broad problem of the reinforcement of the Far East by troops moving eastward and that the submission of a request with regard to the Australian forces, which would form part of the general move, was awaiting the conclusion of their detailed examination of the arrangements for transports and a naval escort.[2]

After a discussion on the telegrams from Churchill and Bruce the Advisory War Council recommended on 31st December that if a specific request were made for the transfer of an A.I.F. division from the Middle East to the Far East, the Government should approve of the request.[3]

Early in January 1942, the Dominions Office, when reporting the total plans agreed to at Washington for the reinforcement of the Far East, said that two of the infantry divisions required for Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies must come from the Middle East, where they would be replaced in due course by divisions from the United Kingdom. While recognising the natural desire of Australia that the Australian Corps should be kept together, the United Kingdom asked Australia if it would agree to sending two of the Australian divisions from the Middle East to the Netherlands East Indies.[4] The Advisory War Council discussed the request on the 5th and recommended that the Government should agree to transfer the 6th and 7th Divisions, which had been designated by Blamey for the purpose, from the Middle East to the Netherlands East Indies, together with corps troops and maintenance and base organisations. This recommendation was taken as the decision of the War Cabinet.[5]

At the same time it was decided to obtain Blamey's views on the arrangements for the command and organisation of the A.I.F. in the new theatre, and these views and the comments of the Australian Chiefs of Staff on them were eventually considered by the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council on 20th January in conjunction with other matters relating to the organisation of the headquarters of Wavell, who had been appointed Supreme Commander in an area designated the A.B.D.A. Area, to the north of Australia.[6] The point of chief concern to Australia was that when there were three divisions of the A.I.F. in the Far East there should be one supreme authority in command of the A.I.F. with the same powers and authority as the G.O.C., A.I.F. Middle East, in order to ensure proper

[1] Telegram from Page, 20 Dec. The U.K. Chiefs of Staff appreciation was communicated to Australia in a telegram from the Dominions Office, 23 Dec 1941.
[2] Telegram from Bruce, 31 Dec 1941.
[3] Advisory War Council Minute 635, 31 Dec 1941.
[4] Telegram from Dominions Office, 3 Jan 1942.
[5] Advisory War Council Minute 644 and War Cabinet Minute 1667, 5 Jan 1942.
[6] War Cabinet Minute 1716 and Agendum 37/1942. See also footnote at page 49 below.

regard for Australian interests and coordinate administrative requirements. This objective, however, had to be considered in conjunction with the objectives which Australia was also pursuing of having Australian representation on the staff of the Supreme Commander and of Australian representation on any council charged with the higher direction of the war.[7]

The Australian Government's intention when approval was given for the return of the two A.I.F. divisions was clearly that they should go into the A.B.D.A. Area. Wavell's plan was that the 7th Division should go to southern Sumatra and the 6th Division and a British armoured brigade to central Java.

Reinforcements from the United States were also originally directed towards the defence of areas north of Australia, and those who remained on the mainland were concerned almost wholly with the organisation of air bases in Australia and with the operation of air forces from these bases to protect lines of communication and to support United States defence of the Philippines.

A convoy which had left San Francisco late in November to carry supplies and troops to the Philippines was en route when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and on 13th December it was directed to Australia, the senior officer, Brigadier-General Julian F. Barnes, being designated Commander, United States Forces in Australia, and instructed to prepare the aircraft in the convoy for combat and get them to General MacArthur, in the Philippines, under whose command he was placed. The convoy reached Brisbane on 22nd December. Major-General George H. Brett was sent to Australia on 28th December to assume command of all United States Army interests in that region, Barnes becoming his Chief of Staff. Brett, who arrived on the 31st, was told that the purpose was to make his command predominantly an air command with ground elements limited to the effective protection and security of air bases. Major-General Lewis H. Brereton, Commanding General, Far East Air Force, came to Australia from the Philippines at the direction of General MacArthur, Commander of United States Army Forces in the Far East, given on 24th December, to organise advanced operating bases from which, with the Far East Air Force, he could protect lines of communication, secure bases in Mindanao and support the defence of the Philippines. Both officers had their first meeting with the Australian Chiefs of Staff and representatives of the Department of Defence Coordination on 3rd January 1942, on which date they established their headquarters in Melbourne.

The 4,600 United States troops who had arrived in Brisbane were quickly dispersed. In early January 1,300 moved on to Darwin, 1,500 to Townsville and 700 to the Netherlands East Indies, leaving 1,100 in Brisbane.[8]

On 22nd January a report from the Australian Legation in Washington summarised the present and prospective land and air reinforcements from

[7] War Cabinet Minute 1717 and Advisory War Council Minute 682, 20 Jan 1942.
[8] War Cabinet Agendum 13/1942 and telegram from Casey, 10 Jan 1942.

the United States as follows. There were already in Australia 2,600 Air Corps troops and 2,000 other troops, mainly field artillery, with 52 Dauntless dive bombers, 130 Kittyhawk fighters and 5 transports, and 20 75-mm guns. There were en route and due to arrive by the end of the first week in February 7,000 troops (Air Corps, engineers and miscellaneous) with 162 Kittyhawk fighters and 10 observation aircraft. By about the end of February more Air Corps personnel would arrive bringing the total in that arm to 10,000; and they would be accompanied by 400 radio detection troops, and about 8,300 anti-aircraft personnel. A total of 80 heavy four-engined bombers, 80 medium bombers, additional fighters to bring the total to 433, anti-aircraft guns and searchlights were to be sent but the date of their arrival could not be forecast.[1] In addition, New Caledonia was to be reinforced by about 22,000 troops.[2]

These dispositions represented measures to be taken in Australia primarily to support operations outside Australia. By the time they arrived, changed circumstances gave them the role of helping to deliver Australia from the fear of invasion.[3]

It was also hoped that the United States would accept some measure of responsibility for the garrisoning of Australia. Churchill told Curtin in early January that he believed that the United States would be willing to send 40,000 to 50,000 troops to Australia to reinforce the Australian home defence troops, and he asked Curtin the direct question: Do you think you are in immediate danger of invasion in force? Curtin immediately asked the Australian Chiefs of Staff for their observations and was told, first, that the danger of invasion in force would remain until a front had been clearly stabilised along the Malay barrier or until the United Nations had secured supremacy over the Japanese Fleet. They welcomed the suggestion for American reinforcements. It was assumed that the American formations would come to Australia fully-equipped and that they would be subject to the Australian Chief of the General Staff in respect of training and operations. Apart from the question of Australian security, an added argument for the proposed action was that Australia was an admirable base for reinforcements for offensive action against the Japanese in the South-West Pacific and it was desirable, the Chiefs of Staff said, that forces for this purpose should be located in Australia as soon as possible. The Advisory War Council and the War Cabinet in turn endorsed this view, at the same time making the point that the provision of these troops alone would not meet Australian needs as there were serious

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[1] These troops were sent to Australia as an outcome of a recommendation to the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, Lieut-General George C. Marshall, by a staff officer, Brigadier-General Dwight D. Eisenhower, on 14th December. Eisenhower had advised "that the United States must keep open the Pacific line of communication to Australia and go ahead as fast as possible to establish a military base there".—M. Matloff and E. M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1941-1942* (1953), p. 87—a volume in the official series *United States Army in World War II.*

[2] Telegram from Casey, 22 Jan 1942.

[3] For fuller details of the arrival of American troops see McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year,* and Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942.*

deficiencies in aircraft and other equipment, about which representations had already been made in London and Washington.[4]

The Far Eastern situation itself was changing rapidly and each change brought an adjustment in policy, and greater urgency in the appeal for aid. At the New Year the general strategic policy agreed upon by the United Kingdom and United States Chiefs of Staff was, first, to hold the Malay barrier; second, to hold Burma and Australia as essential bases; third, to establish communications through the Dutch East Indies with Luzon and to support the Philippines garrison; and, fourth, to maintain essential communications within the theatre. The chief immediate responsibility of the United States was to hold the Philippines, and that of the United Kingdom was to hold Malaya. Australia herself was contributing to the defence of Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, and to the general naval strength of the whole Pacific theatre and was mainly concerned with the defence of the Australian mainland as a base.

Towards the end of January, as the news from Malaya became worse and the Japanese attack on New Guinea developed, the Australian Government grew more and more concerned over the possibility of invasion of the mainland. On 23rd January—the day Rabaul fell—after an emergency meeting of the War Cabinet, Curtin in a direct message to Churchill spoke of the public feeling of grave uneasiness in Australia at the Allied impotence to do anything to stem the Japanese advance. The Australian Government, in realising its responsibility to prepare the public for the possibility of invasion, also had an obligation to explain why it might not be possible to prevent the enemy reaching Australian shores. He referred to reports from London that the Defence Committee had been considering the evacuation of Malaya and Singapore. After all the assurances that had been given, the evacuation of Singapore would be regarded in Australia and elsewhere as an "inexcusable betrayal". It had been understood that this central fortress in the system of Empire and local defence was to be made impregnable and that, in any event, it was to be capable of holding out for a prolonged period until the arrival of the main fleet. If reinforcements were to be diverted from Malaya in an emergency they should be sent to the Netherlands East Indies and not to Burma.

Curtin referred to the Japanese attack on Rabaul and the prospective early atttack on Port Moresby, the only base from which control could be exercised over the Torres Strait supply line. He stated that the Australian Chief of the Naval Staff was communicating direct with the Commander-in-Chief United States Pacific Fleet, offering Australian forces and seeking his cooperation in an offensive action against the Japanese in the Marshalls. British assistance to influence such a move on the part of the Americans would be helpful. Australia also agreed with New Zealand views that the unified command over all naval forces engaged in the war against Japan and the eventual formation of a fleet superior to the Japanese in the western Pacific remained essential to the defeat of Japan.

[4] War Cabinet Agendum 32/1942, 17 Jan 1942, enclosing Chiefs of Staff Paper No. 3, 16 Jan; Advisory War Council Minute 684, 20 Jan; War Cabinet Minute 1719, 20 Jan.

Australia renewed, too, her requests for fighter aircraft, asking that up to 250 modern American fighters be immediately allotted to the R.A.A.F.[5]

The same message was conveyed to Roosevelt by Casey, on instructions. The President referred it to his Chiefs of Staff, made a number of personal comments and concluded that he appreciated the concern of Australia but, looking at the war picture as a whole, as he was obliged to do, and with the knowledge of what was in preparation, he had very little anxiety for the security of Australia itself.[6]

On the 27th Curtin again approached both Churchill and Roosevelt pressing for the allotment of additional aircraft to Australia.[7] In Washington and London, Australian representatives were instructed to make strenuous efforts to obtain a fuller appreciation of Australia's situation.

The outlook at the end of January, as seen from Australia, was dark. In Malaya the defending forces had withdrawn into Singapore Island. The Australian Corps would begin to arrive from the Middle East in about three weeks' time and, in view of the changed situation in Singapore, would be used in the first instance to secure vital areas in Sumatra and Java. Reinforcements of British and American air forces were on the way. Perhaps the enemy could be held.

The information now received from Pearl Harbour showed that the losses there on 7th December had been more serious than at first thought, with a total loss of five battleships.[8] The United States naval forces were making a sweep from Samoa towards the Gilbert Islands. The Japanese, while keeping up the intense pressure on Singapore appeared to be making two other thrusts. A large convoy was proceeding by the Moluccas, probably against Ambon, and a large concentration of shipping had been observed at Balikpapan, probably to move against Macassar or Bandjermasin. Rabaul had been taken after dive bombers had destroyed the coast defences, and the next move in that region would probably be against Port Moresby or New Caledonia. Port Moresby was defended by one Australian brigade and a force of 6 Hudsons, 2 Wirraways and 2 Catalinas. Reconnaissance had disclosed 4 cruisers, 6 destroyers and 13 transports in Rabaul harbour. New Caledonia was held by local forces and one A.I.F. Independent Company but United States reinforcements were on the way.

On 29th January 1942, the Australian Chiefs of Staff prepared a further appreciation, at the direction of the War Cabinet, on the defence of Australia. The land forces available for the defence of the mainland totalled five divisions, two cavalry divisions and one armoured division, less its support group, but, except for units at Darwin and in the islands adjacent to Australia, troops were not completely trained or equipped. With the present rate of production, most of the major items of field army

[5] Curtin to Churchill, 23 Jan 1942.
[6] Telegram from Casey, 24 Jan 1942.
[7] Telegram of 27 Jan 1942.
[8] There were eight battleships in the harbour at the time of the attack. Actually only two proved to be beyond repair.

equipment could be completed by the middle of 1942. The army still had only 10 American light tanks but a total of 70 mixed infantry and light tanks from British production had either been shipped or promised for early delivery. Local production would not begin until May, and deliveries would then only be slow. Anti-aircraft guns and radio direction-finding apparatus were still far short of requirements. The first-line strength of aircraft was 65 Hudsons, 14 Catalinas and 98 Wirraways, including 36 Hudsons employed in the Indonesia-Darwin area but not including the R.A.A.F. squadrons in Malaya. Owing to lack of modern aircraft, crews could not be trained to operational standards, although the number of partly-trained crews was more than enough.

In a discussion of the enemy's probable scale of attack, the Chiefs of Staff expressed the view that the Japanese would concentrate on the capture of Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies and on the interruption of supplies into China and Rangoon, before attempting full-scale operations against the Australian mainland. At the same time, they considered that the enemy would move southward from the Caroline and Marshall Islands in order to secure bases from which further operations could be carried out and the recent occupation of Rabaul was seen as the first stage of this movement. The appreciation continued:

So long as the Malay Barrier holds and the U.S.A. Fleet remains a threat to the Japanese sea line of communication to the south, we consider it unlikely that the Australian mainland is liable to attack other than by sporadic raids by naval forces and ship-borne aircraft, possibly accompanied by small landing parties for raiding activities. But we cannot assume that Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies will hold nor that the U.S.A. Fleet will secure supremacy in the Pacific and we must therefore plan for the maximum scale of attack. The only limitation of the latter is the amount of shipping Japan has available to her.

New Guinea is our most important outpost, its retention, particularly Papua, being essential for the security of the passage through Torres Strait. With the occupation of Rabaul, Japan may be expected to make a large-scale move against Port Moresby at an early date.

New Caledonia occupies an important strategic position both in relation to our sea communications to the eastward and to its use as a stage in the U.S.A.-Australian air ferry service. Both it and the New Hebrides are now open to any scale of attack Japan sees fit to bring against them, and it is considered that an attack in this area is likely.

Timor and Ambon guard the approaches to Darwin, an important naval and air operating base, and the eastern terminal of the Malay Barrier. With the encirclement of the Philippines, Ambon is now virtually in the front line, while the threat to Timor is no less direct though perhaps further removed in point of time.

The great extent of our vulnerable coastline, particularly on the East, renders inevitable a very large degree of dispersion of our land and air forces. The reserves available are therefore limited in number and are further limited in scope owing to the distances over which they may have to be moved to meet any serious threat.

We are, moreover, compelled to concentrate a large proportion of our land force strength on the vital area of Newcastle-Sydney-Kembla and are left dangerously weak in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia.

In the Islands, the garrisons are inadequate for the scale of attack they may be called on to meet. New Caledonia, for example, requires a garrison approximating one division with comparable air support. We have so far only been able to send one Independent Company trained in guerilla warfare.

It is clearly beyond our capacity to meet any attack of the weight that the Japanese could launch either on the mainland or in the islands. At the same time, our limitations in manpower and equipment deny us the capacity to increase our forces to any appreciable extent. Land and air forces can only be sent to increase a garrison at one point by weakening our strength at another.[9]

On 31st January[1] the Australian Government was informed that, in response to their urgent requests, it was proposed to provide additional equipment, above anything previously planned, including 125 Kittyhawks, diverted from the quantity earmarked for the Middle East, 72 Bofors guns from the February production of the United Kingdom, together with 12 howitzers, 48 25-pounders and 48 2-pounder anti-tank guns; and a total of 335 tanks from February and March production. The United States had also been asked to divert a further 125 Kittyhawks from the reserves which they were shipping for their own squadrons going into the A.B.D.A. Area. It was also pointed out to Australia that the reinforcements flowing into the A.B.D.A. Area also contributed to the defence of Australia and, according to the way the situation developed, they might in certain cases actually find their way to Australia. The United Kingdom, however, was still concerned with the danger of spreading resources so widely as to lead to general weakness. In particular they stressed the needs of the Middle East, from which certain units and equipment had already been drawn for the Far East.

During this early period of war in the Far East, in the clamour for reinforcement, there undoubtedly was a feeling in the Australian Government that Great Britain was doing less than was due to Australia and far less than was required to avert disaster in the Far East. There was evident, too, a disposition to look with greater hope towards the United States and to nurse a belief—a belief based on hope rather than on anything that had been said or done up to that stage—that there was more sympathy in Washington than in London. Perhaps being a member of the family the British were judged more harshly than the Americans. The reverses in Malaya were made the occasion for blame of Britain for unpreparedness and all other military faults while the corresponding debacle in the Philippines passed without comment or was noticed only for its gallantry. At the same time there was a non-military section of opinion that placed high confidence in a Russian alliance. By the end of December, Curtin himself had begun to think that the war in the Pacific could be won by a combination of the strength of the Soviet Union and the United States of America.

Although he continued throughout January to address urgent appeals to Churchill to do more to defend Malaya, he tended to place chief reliance for a time on America and the Soviet Union and to foresee the role of Australia as one of the dominant members in a partnership with these two foreign powers against Japan. The episode is instructive for the light it throws on the new Government's approach to world affairs.

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[9] War Cabinet Agendum 31/1942, 30 Jan, covering Chiefs of Staff Paper No. 4, 29 Jan 1942.
[1] Telegram from Dominions Office.

"The Australian Government's policy has been grounded on two facts," Curtin said on 27th December. "One is that the war with Japan is not a phase of the struggle with the Axis Powers, but is a new war. The second is that Australia must go on to a war footing. . . . As the Australian Government enters 1942, it has behind it a record of realism in respect of foreign affairs."

After referring to the declaration of war against Finland, Hungary and Rumania and a suggestion for an Anglo-Russian agreement to meet aggression from Japan, he continued:

> Now, with equal realism, we take the view that, while the determination of military policy is the Soviet's business, we should be able to look forward with reason to aid from Russia against Japan. We look for a solid and impregnable barrier of democracies against the three Axis Powers and we refuse to accept the dictum that the Pacific struggle must be treated as a subordinate segment of the general conflict. By that is not meant that any one of the other theatres of war is of less importance than the Pacific, but that Australia asks for a concerted plan evoking the greatest strength at the democracies' disposal determined upon hurling Japan back.
>
> The Australian Government, therefore, regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan. Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom. We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion. We know the dangers of dispersal of strength. But we know, too, that Australia can go and Britain can still hold on. We are, therefore, determined that Australia shall not go and shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the United States as its keystone, which will give to our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy. Summed up, Australian external policy will be shaped towards obtaining Russian aid and working out, with the United States as the major factor, a plan of Pacific strategy along with British, Chinese and Dutch forces.[2]

If realism means a close correspondence to the facts, that statement did not merit the self-given label of realistic, for at the time it was made Russian aid in the Pacific was improbable; the United Kingdom and not Australia had already been recognised in Washington to be the power which, with the United States, would have "the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan" in the Pacific; Churchill and Roosevelt and the British and American Chiefs of Staff had already agreed that the struggle was not two separate wars but a global war and that the Axis Powers would have to be defeated first in Europe; and that reinforcements for Australia would be considered in conjunction with the demands from other theatres, including Russia itself, and subject to the limitations of the total production, total manpower and total shipping of Britain and America, and the other claims established by the over-all strategy. It may have been that Curtin was conscious that his statement was not a piece of realism but only his form of protest against a "realistic" view which reduced the survival of Australia to being only one among many issues.

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[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 13, pp. 11-12.

"We are, therefore, determined that Australia shall not go" was a cry from the heart of a man who saw his own country in danger.

As the quotation from Curtin has raised the question of Russian intervention against Japan, it will be necessary to make a digression at this point to examine certain aspects of that subject. The whole of the reasons why Russian intervention against Japan was impossible—and perhaps should not be sought—belong to a wider field of diplomatic and military studies and would have to be studied in the archives of other governments. Sufficient to record here the nature and form of the Australian Government's contributions to the discussion for the sake of the illumination they throw on the conduct of the Australian war effort.

In conjunction with the Russian request, in October 1941, for a declaration of war on Finland, Hungary and Rumania, the United Kingdom considered the possibility of common action with the Soviet Union to deter Japan. On 16th October Bruce reported from London that the British War Cabinet had authorised immediate consultation with the United States as to the action to be taken in case of a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union; and on the 24th the Dominions Office repeated to Australia instructions which had been sent to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, to open inquiries. In the meantime the Soviet Ambassador in London had approached the United Kingdom with a request that Britain and America should issue a strong warning to Japan, and he had been informed of the British approach to the United States. The Australian Government, after consultation with the Advisory War Council, favoured the issuing of a warning to Japan that any attack by Japan on Russia would be resisted by force by the British Commonwealth, irrespective of the attitude of the United States of America, and suggested that at the same time the British Commonwealth should seek a reciprocal guarantee from Russia, although such a guarantee should not be made a condition of issuing the warning. At the same time, the Australian Government, interpreting the return to London as Japanese Ambassador of Shigemitsu, a moderate, as a hopeful sign of "great significance", said that the warning should reiterate "our willingness and desire to seek a general settlement in the Pacific which respects the rights of all parties". These views were communicated to the United Kingdom on 4th November. The Australian proposal was not carried beyond discussion in the British War Cabinet.[3]

There is apparently no evidence that, before urging a British Commonwealth guarantee to the Soviet Union, the Australian Government considered in military terms how such a commitment would be fulfilled. It appears to have been a suggestion that sprang from the Department of External Affairs rather than from Defence. At the meeting at which it approved this course and took its major decision on Finland, Hungary and Rumania, the War Cabinet also gave permission to Evatt who, as Minister for External Affairs, had been prominent in the handling of the

[3] Telegram from Page, 4 Dec 1941.

subject, "to submit for consideration a proposal regarding the composition of a special delegation to Russia".[4]

Immediately after the Japanese attack, Australia informed the United Kingdom that the time had arrived "to make an earnest attempt to obtain Russia's intervention" and asked that this view should receive the prompt consideration of the British War Cabinet and the United States Government.[5] The matter was also raised by Page at a special meeting of the British War Cabinet on 10th December.

There was evidently a suspicion on the part of the Australian Government that the attitude of the British was one of the major obstacles to an agreement with Russia. The talks between Mr Anthony Eden, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Stalin in Moscow in the second half of December and the discussion by them of proposals for mutual military assistance, political collaboration during and after the war and the Soviet request for a secret protocol relating to post-war frontiers provided the occasion for the Australian Government to press its views strongly and frankly.[6]

Describing her attitude as one of "complete realism"—"realism" seems to have been a favourite word of both Curtin and Evatt—Australia said to the United Kingdom:

> The attitude we are inclined to recommend is to accede to Stalin's wishes as far as possible, providing he undertakes to commence war against Japan in the near future. . . . We think there is very urgent need for specific understandings with Russia regarding military, naval and air cooperation. We are not concerned to block Stalin's wish ultimately to gain territory at the expense of Germany and Japan so long as we can overthrow those powers. In any event in view of the realisation of our unpreparedness for the Far East campaign against Japan, Russia's assistance may become one of crucial importance. We believe we should bargain frankly for immediate Russian support against Japan. In particular, it should be possible (subject to the United States Government being informed) to convey to Stalin that at the peace settlement Russian frontier claims in the west will receive the general support of British countries. As we see it, these frontier claims are no more than we had to recognise *de facto* in 1939 and 1940, and are of such a nature as would at once be conceded by Hitler without compunction to secure the *status quo ante* the outbreak of German-Soviet hostilities. We note in this respect that in all the dealings with the Czechoslovakian and Polish Governments, the United Kingdom Government has carefully refrained from giving any guarantees of restoration of complete territorial integrity, and we feel that Finland, Rumania and others are not deserving of any special sympathy. We consider further that such an intimation would be more likely to be acceptable to Stalin if it were accompanied by a similar reference to Russian strategical and territorial requirements in the Far East (i.e. Northern Korea, Southern Saghalien and possibly the neutralisation of Manchuria) and also to the long-standing Russian objective of an outlet to the Indian Ocean by way of Iran. The present exchanges with Stalin should be conducted on the broadest possible lines. Otherwise it appears only too likely that, by delaying too much as to the question of Russia's European frontiers, the opportunity for

[4] Telegram from Bruce, 16 Oct; from Dominions Office 24 Oct (2), 30 Oct; from New Zealand 31 Oct; to Dominions Office 4 Nov 1941. War Cabinet Minutes 1464 on Agendum 363/1941, 30 Oct and 1480 on Agendum 363/1941, Supplement 1, 7 Nov 1941; War Cabinet Agendum 335/1941.

[5] Telegram to Dominions Office, 11 Dec 1941. Repeated to Australian Ministers at Washington and Chungking.

[6] Telegram to Dominions Office, 22 Dec 1941.

Anglo-Russian understanding and cooperation in the wider theatres of war may be lost. We press these views most strongly.

When this telegram, which had been prepared by Evatt, was read to a meeting of the Advisory War Council on the day after its dispatch members questioned the advisability of offering the Soviet Union an outlet to the Indian Ocean by way of Iran and the cablegram received no concurrence from the council but its submission was formally noted.[7]

The talks with Russia did not proceed along the lines of the Australian suggestions. Churchill, in a personal telegram to Curtin, said that it would be quite impossible for the United Kingdom Government to make a bargain with Stalin involving the forcible transferring of large populations against their will into Communist spheres. Articles 2 and 3 of the Atlantic Charter clearly forbade any such acts on the part of Britain and by attempting it they would only vitiate the fundamental principles of freedom which were the main impulse of the Allied cause.[8]

Somewhat nettled, Curtin replied that there was no occasion to quote the Atlantic Charter, which need not be infringed, and explained that the earlier message meant that it was desirable to conduct the conversations with Stalin on the broadest lines to avoid the danger that he would suppose that the British would necessarily block his desire for an adjustment of frontier claims. "Obviously such adjustments would have to take into account the principle that so far as practicable the peoples concerned would have the right to choose their own government."[9]

Two months later the Australian Government had the opportunity of returning to the same point when the United Kingdom consulted the Dominions on a proposal for a three-power discussion between Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States on cooperation during the war and after. The need for such discussions had arisen following the reference to the United States of a demand that Stalin had made that the United Kingdom should agree to recognise at the Peace Conference the 1941 frontiers of Russia with Finland, the Baltic States and Rumania and that such recognition should be a condition for signing an agreement for Soviet cooperation in post-war problems. The United Kingdom saw the demand as being, *inter alia,* a test of the sincerity of their avowed desire to work with Russia during and after the war and feared that a refusal would result in a serious risk that Anglo-Soviet relations would deteriorate and that post-war cooperation among the Big Three would be

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[7] Advisory War Council Minute 619, 23 Dec 1941.

[8] Telegram from Churchill, 22 Dec 1941.
The relevant Articles of the Atlantic Charter read as follows:
Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;
Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.
By signing the United Nations Declaration, Washington, 1st January 1942, both Australia and the Soviet Union declared that they subscribed to the "common programme of purposes and principles" contained in the Atlantic Charter.

[9] Curtin to Churchill, 30 Dec 1941. It is not clear whether Curtin really meant that the principle should be amended to include the words "so far as practicable" or whether he intended to say that the principle should be taken into account "so far as practicable". Neither interpretation does him credit.

endangered. The question was whether it was possible to comply with the demands without doing violence to the Atlantic Charter.[1]

The Australian Government reiterated its view that a misunderstanding with Russia should be avoided by all possible means and added that it was also a "major and immediate objective" to do all that was possible to extend Russian participation in the war to the war against Japan. The minimum which could be presented to Stalin in such a connection would be an assurance, "subject to proper safeguards", of general support for territorial adjustments in Europe, as previously suggested by Australia. If these questions were raised at a three-party conference it was doubtful whether any real satisfaction could be given to Stalin in the near future. Therefore Australia thought it wiser for the United Kingdom to make a further approach to Stalin, without waiting on Roosevelt's reply to the suggestion for conversations, and tell him the position with complete frankness and of British readiness to give general support to his frontier adjustments, "subject to the consent of the peoples concerned being obtained in a way which is deemed proper, having regard to the Atlantic Charter". Australia read Articles 2 and 3 of the Charter as embodying "the general principle of permitting territorial changes if approval is obtained from the inhabitants concerned".[2]

On analysis, this policy of realism on the highest principles cannot appear as other than a readiness to meet Russian terms in order to gain Russian participation in the war in the Far East. It cannot mean anything else than that the Australian Government was in favour of giving the territories to the Soviet Union, provided a way could be found of ensuring that the populations voted in favour of placing themselves under the Soviet—a task which events have shown is not beyond the resources of an occupying power. There also appeared, however, to be some measure of confidence on the part of the Australian Government that the Soviet Union would itself feel the restraint of the obligations it had incurred in accepting the Atlantic Charter.

At this period pro-Russian feeling in Australia was swelling, fed both by admiration of Soviet resistance and a realisation of the importance of Russia to the success of the war. Coupled with this weight of popular opinion, the new Government felt that its own "progressive" social system and its egalitarian economic aims made it more fitted to understand the Soviet Union and more likely to be regarded sympathetically by the Russians than a British Government led by a Conservative. It conceived its role to be to help lessen that distrust and suspicion which the Soviet had shown, presumably for good reason, over British policies. The "realistic" hopes of obtaining Russian aid by "realistic" methods were, however, not achieved and the course of Great Power relations would not appear to have been influenced to any appreciable extent by the Australian Government's views.

Although Curtin may have continued to hope for Russian aid in the

[1] Telegram from Dominions Office, 27 Feb 1942.
[2] Telegram to Dominions Office, 5 Mar 1942.

Pacific, from the beginning of 1942 the practical questions concerned solely such matters as British and American naval forces, the supply of British and American aircraft, the sending of British and American reinforcements, and Australian measures for the defence of the Australian mainland.

5—THE HIGHER DIRECTION OF THE WAR

The outbreak of war with Japan presented more urgently than ever those problems of participation in the higher councils of the war that had exercised the minds of Australian Ministers in every crisis since the war began. In the Australian view it was necessary to provide machinery for the higher direction of the war which would ensure attention to the special problems of the Pacific theatre, and give due recognition to each of the Allies. It was also necessary to set up a unified command or commands, as might be necessary, to conduct operations in the field and to ensure that forces were used in the most effective way. Arrangements had also to be made for the best disposition of available resources, to handle reinforcement and supply and to link the needs of the major theatres of operations with production in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

The Australian Government's concern over Australian participation in the higher councils of the war presented in a new form and in new circumstances those questions of unity and autonomy which the British Commonwealth had failed to resolve in the period between the two wars. In wartime, even more acutely than in peacetime, the need was felt for common policy and united strength, but, because the commitment was so much greater and its burdens fell so immediately on the Dominions, there was an even greater need that the Dominions should share in the decision. They could no longer take a detached and lofty refuge in their own status but must find some way of sharing the policy-making as well as the fighting. Yet the old processes of consultation were not quick enough to protect the interests of those Dominions who had their divisions in the firing line and their warships and aircraft on active operations. They either had to give their manhood and resources unreservedly into the control of Great Britain or seek to join the higher direction of the war. In Greece they had read that lesson. Now in the Pacific, where the security of their very homes was at issue, they could not leave their fate in the hands of another government, however close and intimate the relationships with that government might be. These problems, which had arisen even when the war was being fought largely by the nations of the British Commonwealth and was restricted to Europe and the Middle East, were immensely complicated now that the war was being fought in all parts of the globe and by three great and independent Powers. Part of the new concern of the Australian Government was that they not only had to assert Australia's autonomy in consultation and cooperation with the Mother Country, but had to ensure that the United States of America and the Soviet Union also thought of Australia and dealt with her as a free and independent nation,

standing as an Ally in her own name. Yet both those two great Allies continued to think of Australia rather loosely as a "British country" and to look to the Dominions to settle their views with the United Kingdom, who in their eyes remained as the party principal, rather than to enter into separate discussion with them.

One of the earliest actions of the Australian War Cabinet and Advisory War Council after Japan struck was to consider the establishment of "a supreme authority for the higher direction and coordinated control of Allied activities and strategy in the war in the Pacific", and on 11th December the United Kingdom was informed of the Australian view that such a body should be created in the Far East, preferably at Singapore. As an initial step towards the evolution of appropriate machinery it was essential that Australia should be more closely associated with the direction of the war in the Pacific.

At the commencement, however, they went down a side track by seeking the appointment of an Australian representative to work in association with Mr Duff Cooper at Singapore.[3]

Before their communication was received in London, Churchill had decided to raise the status of Duff Cooper, who had been on a special mission to the Far East, to that of Resident Minister of Cabinet rank at Singapore "to assist in the successful conduct of operations in the Far East" chiefly by relieving the Commanders-in-Chief of extraneous responsibilities and by giving them broad political guidance.[4] Duff Cooper appointed a War Council to assist him and, with the approval of the British War Cabinet, the Australian Government Representative in Singapore, Mr Bowden, was appointed to this council on 16th December. The Singapore War Council, however, never developed into a "supreme authority for the higher direction and coordinated control of Allied activities and strategy" in the Far East and on 9th January 1942, after other arrangements had been made in Washington, Duff Cooper was recalled to the United Kingdom. From that date the council acted solely for local defence purposes in Malaya. In any case the council was purely a British body to assist a United Kingdom Minister who was serving under the British War Minister.

Behind the Australian move, however, there may have been an expectation that the Singapore War Council could be expanded into an inter-Allied body. Later in December, when the possibility of the creation of a unified command in the Pacific was rumoured, members of the Advisory War Council discussed the possibility of widening the scope of the council to serve an Allied Commander-in-Chief and to include on it a United States representative.[5]

The next Australian move was made as a result of a report from Washington that Roosevelt had suggested a series of simultaneous con-

[3] Telegram to Dominions Office, 11 Dec 1941.

[4] Telegram from Dominions Office, 12 Dec 1941.

[5] Advisory War Council Minute 623, 23 Dec 1941. Telegram from Casey, 22 Dec. The report was to the effect that a unified command in the Pacific was to be created and General MacArthur (then in the Philippines) appointed Commander-in-Chief.

ferences at Chungking, Moscow and Singapore among the nations directly affected to prepare the way for common action against common enemies as seen from the respective centres. The recommendations from these regional conferences could be considered at a further conference in Washington.[6] The Australian Government at once urged on its representatives in London and Washington that in every conference between the associated Powers Australia must have the opportunity of separate representation.[7]

Regional conferences were held at Singapore and Chungking and, as indicated above, Australia was represented at Singapore. No conference was held in Moscow, for the Soviet Union remained neutral towards Japan.

The Washington meeting took the form of discussions between Roosevelt and Churchill with simultaneous Anglo-American staff discussions. Australia had no opportunity to participate and had no information concerning the details of the conference. At the conclusion of the talks Churchill requested Australian assent to the text of an agreement which he forwarded.[8]

The main proposal was that a unified command should be established with Wavell as the Supreme Commander. He would receive his orders from "an appropriate joint body", which would be responsible to Churchill, as United Kingdom Minister for Defence, and to Roosevelt, as President and Commander-in-Chief of all United States forces.

The Australian Government assumed that it would be a member of "the appropriate joint body" and, in that expectation, assented to the agreement reached by Churchill and Roosevelt regarding unity of command. Churchill was so informed.[9] The way in which Australian thought was running is indicated by the discussion in the Advisory War Council, during which the view was expressed that the ideal system would be to set up at Wavell's headquarters a representative council, "each representative having a direct line to his Government". This council should have full authority to decide questions of the "political and economic practicability of providing the requirements of this theatre of war, for example, numbers of fighting personnel, supplies and munitions and associated questions, also the sources from which these requirements are to be met". It was thought that the headquarters should be in the Western Pacific and that the principle of "remote control" was unsound.

This conception clearly arose from the concern, which dominated all subsequent Australian representations on the subject, to ensure that adequate supplies and reinforcements were sent to the Pacific and that decisions were made with a close, first-hand and practical knowledge of the special circumstances and needs of the fighting in the Pacific. It was

[6] Telegrams 16 and 17 Dec 1941 from Casey.

[7] Telegram to Australian Minister Washington, and to High Commissioner London, 16 Dec 1941.

[8] Telegrams (2) from Churchill, 29 Dec 1941.

[9] War Cabinet Minute 1631, 23 Dec; Advisory War Council Minute 631, 31 Dec, and telegram to Churchill, 30 Dec 1941.

also marked by the desire for prompt and effective decisions by the Governments directly concerned in furnishing troops and supplies.

A further indication of the Australian Government's views, and, in the light of subsequent information, of the illusions which it was nursing, is contained in a national broadcast which Curtin made on Boxing Day, speaking with "sober confidence" of the war situation. "The meeting at Washington shows," he said—although what was happening in Washington was not, in fact, fully known to him—"that the democracies are fully alive to the need for cohesive action in directing the Pacific operations. Australia has taken a prominent part in the setting up of the Far Eastern War Council. The main value of that council will be that it will make on-the-spot decisions. These decisions will demand action and support by all the Allied Governments. That support and that action will be given —given by Australia, the United States of America, China, Russia, the Netherlands, Great Britain and her dominions and colonies. We are mobilising the Allies against the Axis."[10]

When the directive which had been sent to Wavell was communicated to Australia on 4th January by Churchill, however, it was discovered that the arrangement for this "appropriate joint body" was that Roosevelt and Churchill should be the higher authority and that a Chiefs of Staff Committee in Washington, composed of the three American Chiefs of Staff and representatives of the three United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, would be the agency through which any matters for final decision would pass. It was added that "since London has machinery for consulting Dominion Governments and since the Dutch Government is in London, the British Government will be responsible for obtaining their views and agreement. . . ." This machinery was to be used to reach decisions on such questions as provision of reinforcements, major changes in policy and departures from the directive given in the first place to the Supreme Commander.

On 7th January 1942 Curtin told Churchill that "the failure to set up any joint body for operations in the Pacific and to provide for more direct consultation with the Commonwealth . . . is a situation we are quite unable to accept". This view had the unanimous endorsement of the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council. The Advisory War Council had insisted that in view of the large forces that Australia would have in the South-Western Pacific theatre, the use that would be made of Australia as a base and Australia's responsibilities for its own local defence, "Australia's voice should be heard in the councils on Pacific strategy".[1]

The Netherlands and New Zealand Governments were equally dissatisfied.

Direct representations were made, through Casey, to both Churchill and Roosevelt, but without result. Churchill offered to create in London a Far Eastern Council, composed of representatives of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands, to "focus and formulate

[10] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 13, p. 8.

[1] Telegrams from Churchill, 29 Dec 1941 (2), 4 Jan 1942 (3); from Curtin, 6 Jan; from Churchill, 9 Jan. Advisory War Council Minute 652, 6 Jan 1942.

the views" of these countries for presentation to Roosevelt and to receive Roosevelt's views in turn, and expressed the view that this would ensure the full and continuous association of the Australian, New Zealand and Netherlands Governments with the whole conduct of the war against Japan. Churchill would preside and other United Kingdom members would be the Lord Privy Seal, who was Churchill's deputy on the Defence Committee of the British War Cabinet, and Duff Cooper. There would be a representative from each of the three other members. The council would be assisted by a staff group of Dominion liaison officers in consultation with the United Kingdom Joint Planning Staff.[2]

The Australian War Cabinet and Advisory War Council both agreed that the proposal was unacceptable. A purely advisory body on which the members did not have the advantage of common membership with the United States was not regarded as affording an adequate share in the direction of the war in the Pacific. They wanted to see established at Washington "a representative Pacific War Council which should be a council of action for the higher direction of the war in the Pacific". Such a council, comprising representatives of the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, China, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, would have associated with it the joint staff already established, and members of the council would be free to appoint their service representatives to that joint staff if they so desired.

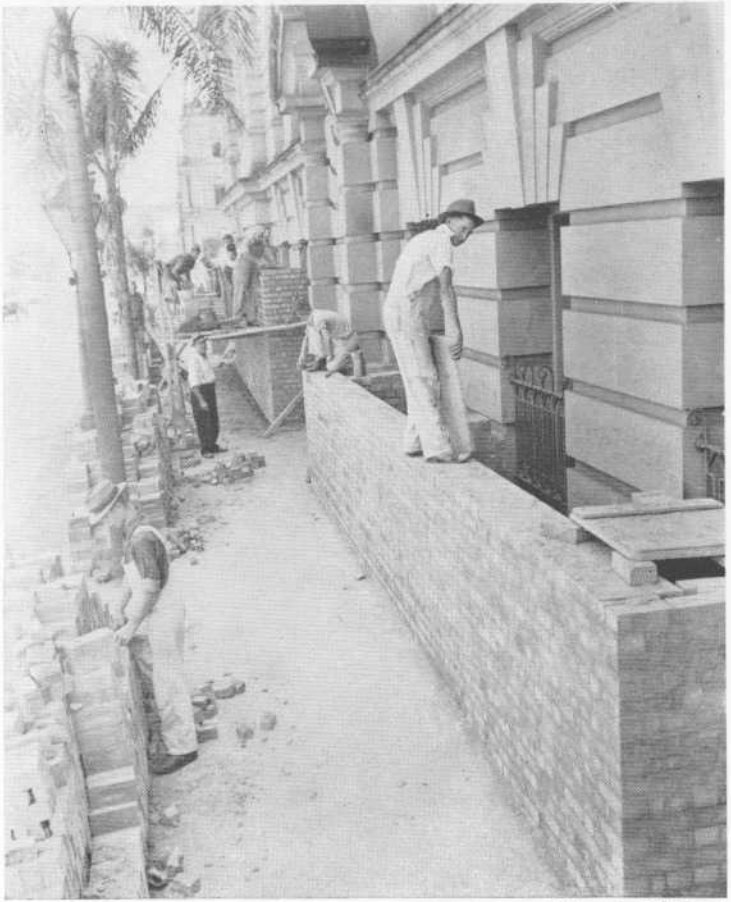
At the same time they sought a more direct participation in the work of the British War Cabinet. They felt that the existing system under which an Australian representative was allowed to attend meetings of the British War Cabinet when matters affecting Australia were discussed was not an effective substitute for the Imperial War Cabinet for which Australia had originally hoped. They wanted a form of representation in the British War Cabinet that would give them the right to be heard in "the formulation and direction of policy".[3]

At this point in the communications between London and Canberra it would appear that London was unable to appreciate fully the Australian claims. At some length, in detail, and with patient reasonableness, London explained how the proposed War Council in London would work but did not appear to be able to understand that the Australian claim to participate in decisions affecting so vitally the security of Australia could not be met by a form of preliminary discussion which would have its most emphatic result in nothing more than the presentation of an opinion to another body which might dispose of it as it chose.

Churchill was asked by Australia to place the Australian views before Roosevelt. In face of the agreement between Churchill and Roosevelt for the direction of the war and the improbability that it could be altered, the Australian Government modified its hopes to a request that a Pacific War Council, on which all Pacific belligerents including the United States would be represented, should be set up at Washington. It believed that in

[2] Telegram from Dominions Office, 19 Jan 1942.

[3] Advisory War Council Minute 700 and War Cabinet Minute 1734, 21 Jan 1942; telegram to Dominions Office, 21 Jan 1942, repeated to Prime Minister of New Zealand.



Telegraph (Brisbane)

Building a brick screen to protect a building in Brisbane, 18th December 1941. With the outbreak of the war in the Pacific the work of air raid precautions was accelerated in all States. In the cities plate glass was removed, display windows were boarded up and doorways and windows protected by brick screens or sandbags.



News (Adelaide)

Sandbagging windows for protection against bomb blast at the Adelaide G.P.O., 25th February 1942.



Sydney Morning Herald

The Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, speaking at a £35,000,000 Liberty Loan rally in Martin Place, Sydney on 18th February 1942. Seated behind Mr Curtin are (left to right) Mr Beasley, the Lord Mayor of Sydney (Alderman Crick), Senator Ashley, Mr Hughes and Mr Fadden.



Sydney Morning Herald

Service detachments and portion of the crowd at the Liberty Loan rally in Martin Place on 18th February 1942.

Washington, "the final seat of authority", a Pacific War Council would be better able to make its views felt expeditiously in the quarter where effective action would be taken and it is also plain from the views communicated that the Australian Government had in mind the possibility that, if an Australian representative differed from his colleagues on the council, he might find other means through the Combined Chiefs of Staff or other channels to make sure that the Australian viewpoint became known. It was equally plain that Australia would be prepared to take sides, in the light of its own judgment, in any difference of opinion as between Churchill and the President. It was for this end that it wanted the United States also to be a member of the council and that it also asked for Australian service representation on the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee already established in Washington.[4]

In developing these ideas about a War Council at Washington, the Australian Government also suggested that the jurisdiction of the council should not be limited to the A.B.D.A. Area.[5]

After further exchanges of telegrams,[6] it was decided on the recommendation of the Advisory War Council that, in view of the urgency of the position in the Pacific, the Government should accept the proposed arrangements for a Pacific War Council in London and a Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee in Washington, though adhering to its view regarding a Pacific War Council, with constitution and functions as suggested, at Washington.[7] There were also some operational objections to the unification of command which had been agreed upon by Roosevelt and Churchill.

In a public statement, Curtin professed satisfaction with the decision on the higher direction of the war and, by implication, claimed a share in the credit for its achievement although in fact Australia had no part in making the original decision and had been dissatisfied with it.

Attention had also been given to the related question of a unified command. On 4th January 1942, Curtin had announced the concurrence of Australia to "a scheme of unified command in the South-West Pacific Area".[8] All forces in this area, the boundaries of which were not mentioned in the public statement, would operate under General Wavell as Supreme Commander. Major-General Brett of the United States Army would be Deputy Supreme Commander and Admiral Thomas C. Hart, United States Navy, would have command of all naval forces in the area. "The Australian people will be gratified and greatly heartened by this announcement," Curtin said. "It is historic and momentous. It affects our Commonwealth

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 725, 30 Jan 1942 and Advisory War Council Agendum 14/1942. Telegram to Dominions Office, 24 Jan, is especially interesting as an indication of the Government's ideas on the functioning of a council in Washington.

[5] Telegram to Dominions Office, 24 Jan, para VI.

[6] Telegrams from Dominions Office (3), 2 Feb; from Page, 3 Feb; from Bruce (2), 3 Feb 1942.

[7] Advisory War Council Minute 738 and War Cabinet Minute 1874, 5 Feb 1942. This was the first War Cabinet meeting that Curtin had attended since 21st January 1942.

[8] Telegram 1240 from the Australian Legation, Washington, 30th December 1941, defined an area as South-West Pacific Area, but four days later, on 3rd January, the directive to Wavell gave him the ABDA Command which was the same as the previously-defined South-West Pacific Area. Because SWPA has become synonymous with MacArthur's command, the term ABDA Command will be used throughout for Wavell's command.

as no previous alignment of great powers has ever done. It represents the policy of concerted Pacific strategy which the Australian Government has advocated and amply justifies all that has been said as part of that advocacy. Stern duty made plain speech imperative. Unlike those who refused to regard the Pacific war in its proper perspective, the Australian Government judged the issues involved with cold realism and based its conception of what had to be done on the inescapable fact that this was a new war—the Pacific war. Therefore, in the light of this announcement, the Australian war effort will take on an added momentum with a new incentive—the fact that united Allied action simultaneously enhances Australia's safety and the repelling of the Japanese offensive. In this country there will be a feeling that the defensive interdependence of the United States and Australia has become a tangible thing. Among the democracies the people whose fate is involved will face the foe knowing that Britain, the United States, the Netherlands East Indies and Australia are fighting and working together to a common plan and with common execution of that plan assured. Australia has now obtained the closest association and cooperation with America. Her human and material assets, co-related with Australia's strategic position, will play a vitally important part in the plans that the Allied land and naval commanders will put into effect."[9]

In private, however, the Government was far from happy about the decision which it extolled to the Australian people as a triumph for its own "cold realism".

When the text of the agreement was received from Churchill on 30th December the boundaries of the united command in the South-West Pacific —the A.B.D.A. Command—to be placed under Wavell had not yet been finally settled but it was presumed that the boundaries would include the Malay Peninsula, Burma, across to the Philippines and southwards to the necessary supply bases, principally Darwin. It appeared that the Australian area, including the Australian continent, New Guinea, the Solomons, New Hebrides and Fiji would be excluded both from the A.B.D.A. Area and from the area in the Pacific for which the United States fleet, based on Honolulu, would be responsible. The advice of the Australian Chiefs of Staff to Cabinet was that the adoption of these proposals would result in Australia and New Zealand being isolated and left to defend the Australian area without Allied assistance and with entirely inadequate naval, military and air resources, thereby endangering the line of sea and air communication between the United States and Australia upon which the defence of the South-West Pacific Ocean mainly depended.

Curtin immediately cabled to Churchill and also instructed Casey to seek an interview with Churchill and Roosevelt and place the Australian views before them in the most emphatic manner possible. "It appears to us to be an amazing paradox," he said, "following declarations framed to express the unity of our aims and efforts, that a plan should be put

[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 14, pp. 4-5.

forward which views the defence situation in the Pacific in such a piecemeal manner. In our opinion the plan is strategically unsound. The Japanese have only to avoid the main Allied concentrations in the South-West Pacific theatre and attack the Australian area, which will be weakly held, in order to block the line of communications from America and prevent the use of Australia as a base." This would frustrate the intention to use Australia as a channel through which men and material from the United States could be moved into the South-West Pacific.[1]

As already indicated Australia also objected to the disposition of the main British naval forces in the Indian Ocean while at the same time the United States Pacific Fleet was reported to be unavailable to undertake major tasks in the western Pacific. In the Australian service view this meant having two inferior fleets, one in the Indian Ocean and one in the Pacific Ocean, instead of concentrating a superior fleet which could force a decisive action on the enemy.[2]

The Australian Chiefs of Staff favoured a system of command under which the Pacific area to the north-east and east of Australia would be included in the area for which the United States Pacific Fleet was responsible, operational bases for the fleet being provided in Australia, while the Commander of the A.B.D.A. Area would have "the general strategic control" of such of the forces in Australia as might be "designated or allotted to or in support of the South-West Pacific Area".

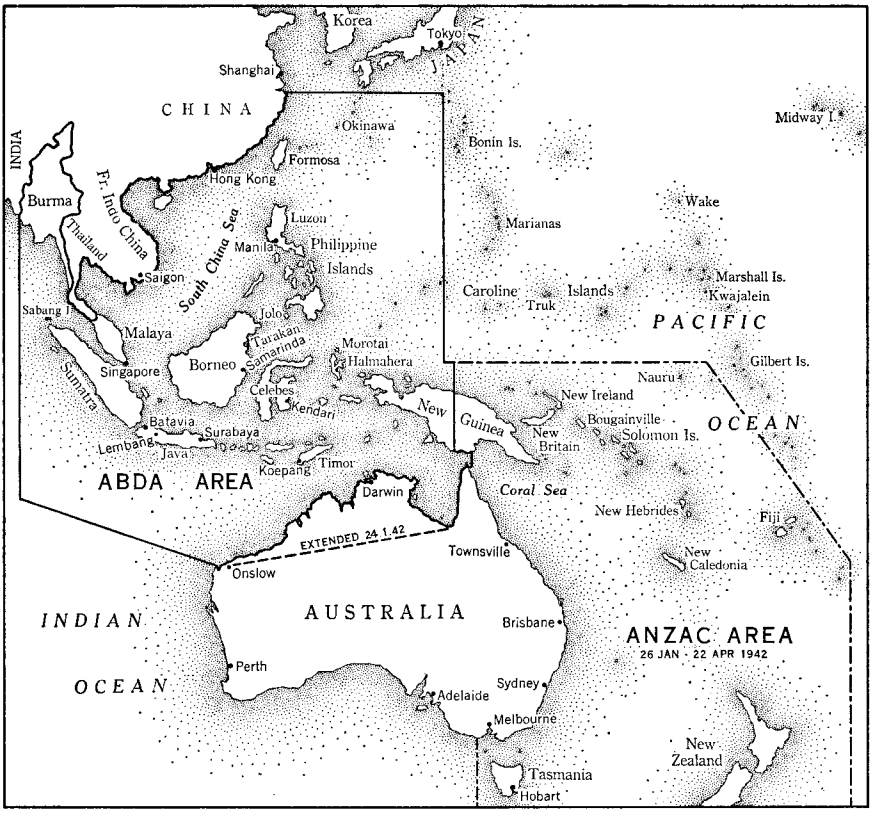
A.B.D.A. Command in the South-West Pacific was established as first planned, excluding Australia, but having the northern coast of Australia as its southern boundary. The Australian Government continued to be critical. It thought the whole strategical approach was wrong, that Australia had been allotted responsibility for an Australian area for which her existing resources were inadequate and for which she received no Allied aid; that nevertheless Australia was to be used as an essential support to both British and American operations; and that without adequate naval protection the line of communication to Australia for American supply ships could not be maintained.

As the result of continued Australian representations it was arranged in January, first, that part of northern Australia, north of a line running from Onslow to the south-eastern corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria should be placed under Wavell's command in the A.B.D.A. Area, Australian forces being allocated to their defence, and that a new naval area called the Anzac Area should be formed as "an adjunct of the Pacific area" taking in, roughly, the ocean south of the equator between Australia and Fiji. The forces assigned to this area were to be under the command of a United States admiral directly responsible to the Commander-in-Chief, United States Pacific Fleet, and their tasks were to include the covering of the eastern and north-eastern approaches to Australia, and support for the defence of the islands in the area. The forces allotted included

[1] Telegram to Australian Minister, Washington, 1 Jan 1942.
[2] Telegram to Australian Minister, Washington, 31 Dec 1941.

one British aircraft carrier and one American heavy or light cruiser. Australia and New Zealand supplied the remainder.[3]

Arising from this arrangement, New Zealand proposed in February unified control for land and air as well as sea in the Anzac Area, and proposals were developed for a Supreme Command over the Anzac Area, enlarged to include the whole of Australia less the northern portion allotted to the A.B.D.A. Area. The progress of events, however, with the contraction and eventual disappearance of Wavell's command, the loss of the Philippines and MacArthur's arrival in Australia soon led to new arrangements.



Besides the difficulties in the way of inter-Allied consultation and Australian participation in the inter-Allied bodies for the higher direction of the war, the arrangements within the British Commonwealth were still not wholly satisfactory to Australia. Reporting on his experiences as Accredited Representative to the British War Cabinet, Page drew attention to the fact that the Australian Government did not have complete

[3] Telegram to Dominions Office, 21 Jan 1942, and from Dominions Office, 28 Jan 1942.

knowledge of all essential facts; it did not obtain information in time to express its views before decisions were taken; and the procedure and atmosphere of the British War Cabinet meetings did not provide adequate opportunities for discussing Australian views with the War Cabinet, the Defence Committee or the Prime Minister.[4]

In consequence of this report, Curtin asked Churchill that the following principles might govern consultations in London on common policy:

(*a*) the Australian Government should have full knowledge of all essential points, developments and trends of policy;
(*b*) it should obtain this knowledge in time to express its view before decisions were taken; and
(*c*) it should have the opportunity through its Accredited Representative of presenting to and discussing with the War Cabinet, the important committees such as the Defence Committee and the Prime Minister or other service Ministers, any suggestions as to the new policy or views on the policy under consideration that Australia might from time to time desire to submit.[5]

Page himself was at this time also personally advocating the value of liaison officers rather than of participation in higher executive bodies. If Australian officials were attached to United Kingdom departments or services they would learn at a much earlier stage of matters requiring the attention of their Government and, as well as bringing an Australian point of view to bear during the formative stages of policy, would be able to warn their Government in advance that certain policy decisions would have to be made. With this measure of trust and cooperation and prior knowledge, decisions would be made smoothly by the normal means of consultation between Governments.

From its experience in the British War Cabinet the Australian Government was beginning to realise, too, that it was not only concerned with "questions of immediate and direct concern to Australia" but also with fundamental issues, such as, for example, British relations with the Soviet Union. Therefore, in January, at the time when Australia asked for the establishment of a Pacific War Council in Washington, she also asked that her Accredited Representative in the British War Cabinet should have the right to be heard "in the formulation and direction of policy".[6] Churchill agreed.[7]

The claim which the Australian Government pressed for membership of the British War Cabinet might appear to contradict the objection it had raised to the Pacific War Council in London. While he objected to the creation of one piece of machinery to produce a single British policy to be put forward by Churchill as the viewpoint of both the United Kingdom and two of the Dominions regarding war in the Pacific, Curtin was pressing for Australian representation on the British War Cabinet as the best available substitute for an Imperial War Cabinet which could produce

[4] Telegram from Page, 8 Dec 1941. In fairness to the British Government it may be added that there had been an occasion on which they had been dissatisfied with the custody of their documents.
[5] Telegram to Churchill, 13 Dec 1941.
[6] Telegram to Dominions Office, 21 Jan 1942.
[7] Telegram from Dominions Office, 22 Jan 1942.

a single British Commonwealth policy on the war as a whole. It might appear that Australia was insisting on the right to share in the formulation of policy in the British War Cabinet while rejecting any claim that the United Kingdom, after consultation, could speak on behalf of the Dominions as well as of herself. In reality, however, Australia was trying to distinguish between matters in which she had a special and peculiar interest and on which she must speak for herself and those in which she had a common interest with all members of the British Commonwealth and on which the Commonwealth should speak as one.

After Churchill had expressed assent to the Australian request of 21st January for "the right to be heard in War Cabinet in the formulation and direction of policy" there were further exchanges to find out more exactly what was meant. The first point to be cleared up was that the right could be enjoyed by Australia irrespective of whether other Dominions wanted to exercise it or not.[8] The next point was to find out what the right meant in practice. Australia explained her original request as meaning "full membership of the United Kingdom Cabinet with all rights and privileges unless and until an Imperial War Cabinet is constituted".[9] The United Kingdom thought that formal membership would be constitutionally impossible as the Cabinet was directly responsible to its own Parliament, and the representative of another Government sitting in Cabinet could not be so responsible. Churchill, explaining the proposal to the House of Commons on the 27th, said:

> The presence at the Cabinet table of Dominion representatives who have no power to take decisions and can only report to their Governments evidently raises some serious problems, but none, I trust, which cannot be got over with goodwill. It must not, however, be supposed that in any circumstances the presence of Dominion representatives for certain purposes would in any way affect the collective responsibility of His Majesty's servants in Great Britain to the Crown and Parliament.

The Australian Advisory War Council, however, at a meeting attended by Dr Evatt, Mr Menzies and the parliamentary veteran Mr Hughes, each eminent in his own right in the discussion of constitutional practice, disagreed with the British view. The opinion expressed at the council meeting was that the constitutional position depended upon the convention existing at any particular time and was necessarily subject to development and change. As Australian representation in the United Kingdom War Cabinet, with the right to be heard in the formulation and direction of policy, had now been agreed to, it was considered inadvisable to continue any argument with the United Kingdom Government about the academic aspects of the question. Any views as to constitutional practice or procedure could be settled as they arose. The effectiveness of the results would largely depend on the individual selected as the Australian Accredited Representative.[1]

In a national broadcast on Australia Day, commemorating the first

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[8] Telegram from Dominions Office, 28 Jan 1942, in reply to telegram to Dominions Office, 27 Jan 1942.

[9] Telegram to Dominions Office, 26 Jan 1942.

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 725, 30 Jan 1942.

British settlement on the Australian continent, Curtin claimed the full rights of nationhood and told Australians that the Government had from the outset put its views plainly before Churchill and Roosevelt. Because Australia occupied a vitally important strategic place in the Pacific war and because its very existence depended on the outcome of the struggle, Australia should have a full say in the conduct of the war.

> The whole philosophy of the way of life for which we are fighting means that in wartime it is more important even than in peacetime that consultation as equals should mark the activities, firstly of those charged with the government of a democracy, and secondly those jointly representing the several democracies. No single nation can afford to risk its future on the infallibility of one man, and no nation can afford to submerge its right of speaking for itself because of the assumed omniscience of another.
>
> On this Australia Day, with a full realisation of what this day means to us, we give regard to the meaning of our nationhood. Our men have shown the stuff of which we are made on many a death-charged battlefield; in many a spine-chilling air battle; on the storm-tossed seven seas. Those deeds are our salute to nationhood. We, therefore, claim the right to bring to the collaborating council table the same fighting calibre, the same passionate determination which is our heritage from the past and our possession in the present. The flame of freedom lit in this land by our first settlers, and kept aglow by the generations which followed, is not extinguishable by any enemy. We are the youngest civilisation in the oldest continent. On this our anniversary natal day, I pay tribute to intrepid explorers, hardy pioneers, great citizens, statesmen, industrialists, men and women of the land, heroic warriors, and all those nation-building spirits whose works have come down to us. We dedicate ourselves to their noble aspirations. We shall fulfil their hopes, complete their enterprises.[2]

Perhaps that element of fervent Australian nationalism in the Government's protests was not as clearly seen in London and Washington as the concern for survival and the eagerness to join the higher councils. All nations—but especially those nations which have a common language and a shared loyalty—find it hard to understand how fiercely proud and sensitive the patriotism of others can be, and may dismiss as merely captious the repeated assertion of something that is deeply felt.

6—THE STIRRING OF A PEOPLE

War with Japan and the succession of defeats suffered at the hands of Japan in the opening months of the war changed the outlook of the Australian people and brought stricter and more searching governmental direction and control over their daily lives. In the extremity, they accepted what they had previously resisted and did what they had not thought of doing. There was some reluctance here and there and some recalcitrance when the link between obedience and survival was not clearly seen. Bits of individual selfishness remained. But the patriotism of the mass of the people surged higher than the Government had bidden.

The Prime Minister, perhaps a little uncertain at first, grew in determination and in strength as the response quickened and as the danger grew.

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[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 16, p. 14.

In a speech of 11th December, Curtin gave warning of the harder rule to come:

> There has been appeal after appeal to the people of Australia to do their utmost, but no longer can the responsible Government of Australia rest the safety of this country upon appeals to the multitude. The Government must make the decisions and when they are made I put it to you, with all the solemnity of my high office in a time of great trial, there must be no argument about the wisdom of those decisions. There must be a ready and immediate acceptance of them. . . . Having regard to the present necessity I say that, as the very integrity of this nation is at stake; as the security of its people is involved; as the whole future sovereignty of its territory for Australian people is an issue; there can be no subordinating of these paramount, these overriding, considerations to the satisfying of individual or sectional grievances.

Referring particularly to industrial relations, he added:

> There will be governmental decisions where these decisions are called for. Whether it be employers or employees, this group or that group of citizens, the choice must be made of loyal acceptance of the authority of a freely-elected Parliament. The Government formed in that Parliament accepts responsibility in total of what is meant by governing the country in time of war. I have no doubt that in saying these things I shall be accused of trespassing on the rights and privileges of the people of Australia. On the contrary the people of this country believe that, by conduct of this nature, their rights and liberties can best be secured to them.[3]

Announcing various Government decisions, he spoke of "a complete revision of the whole Australian economic, domestic and industrial life".[4] He told Parliament on the 16th: "In order to achieve defence requirements, the Government will act ruthlessly."

Unlike some of his supporters, he resisted, too, attempts to buy present action with promises of social change. Speaking to a meeting mainly of wharf labourers and other unionists in his own electorate of Fremantle on 28th January, he said he was too busy to give any blue print of a new social order after the war.

> We have to concentrate on the one supreme task which the enemy has imposed upon us. We have to defeat him or die. It is no use speculating at present on new orders to come, nor is it any use preaching the precepts of the Apostles to the enemy. The whine of bullets is the only epistle he will understand.

Australia, Curtin said, was no longer faced with the question of maintaining the highest standard of living for the masses. The question now was how much the people could spare from a frugal living standard to help defeat the enemy.[5]

Among the earliest measures was to enjoin economy in the use of coal and oil. For the conservation of stocks, and so that the greatest share of power should be available to industry—rather than, initially, for purposes of home defence—travel and lighting restrictions were imposed. Excursion fares were discontinued; special tram, omnibus and steam train

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[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 11, pp. 5-6.
[4] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 11, p. 7.
[5] Metropolitan newspapers of 29 Jan 1942.

services to sporting meetings were cancelled.[6] Coal stocks and the maintenance of transport and war industries at full pressure were vital. Behind these lay the constant problem of industrial relations, which could not be settled simply by issuing a new order.

Happily the Government had already been making a special effort to end the discontent of the workers and had claimed progress in the two months it had been in office. The new Minister for Labour and National Service, Mr E. J. Ward, had commenced optimistically because he was sure that he knew what was wrong. The root of a great deal of the unrest in industry, he had said on taking office, was the failure to prevent profiteering in war industries. He thought, too, that a major factor in preventing future hold-ups of production would be the wage-earners' knowledge that they now had in power "a sympathetic government anxious to give the claims they advanced the fullest consideration". He was also satisfied that much unnecessary irritation was being caused by delays in the arbitration system in hearing complaints and announcing decisions. In subsequent weeks he also showed a disposition to blame employers for provoking stoppages.

The Government had applied itself to improving the methods for settling coal disputes, chiefly by allowing greater freedom of action to Local Reference Boards,[7] and had appealed to workers for their confidence. By mid-November 1941 Ward had claimed that no industrial disputes were outstanding (he referred to all industry and not merely to coal), five disputes which he had inherited and twenty-three new disputes having all been settled.[8] The next week a stay-in strike started on the New South Wales coalfields—a strike which Evatt called "utterly mad and utterly bad". It, too, had been settled before the end of the month, with the loss of no more than 90,000 tons of coal, after the Prime Minister had appealed to the Coal Employees' Federation to exert its influence to ensure that no stoppage of production occurred anywhere. "Two things are paramount with the Labour Government," he had declared, "namely justice for the workers and victory in the war. The first, even if we get it now, would only be temporary if the other were not accomplished. These two things are inseparably associated."

Shortly after the outbreak of war with Japan, a Coal Commission containing representatives of the employees and the owners with the Coal Commissioner as Chairman was created to exercise the functions previously entrusted to the Commissioner, and it was given additional powers to enable it to acquire all coal stocks in New South Wales and fix prices throughout Australia.[9] To the workers it was shown that the owners were

[6] These were accomplished by State railway and transport commissioners acting under direction from State governments who, in turn, were carrying out Federal policy.

[7] Amendment to National Security (Coalmining Industry Employment) Regulations by Statutory Rules 1942, No. 281, 3 Dec 1941. Announcement that day by Ward (*Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 10, p. 7).

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 7, p. 17.

[9] The announcement was made on 12 Dec 1941 (*Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 10, p. 9). Regulations were gazetted on 6 Feb 1942 (Statutory Rules, No. 51); these amended Statutory Rules, No. 189, of 8 Aug 1941. Statutory Rules, No. 10, of 9 Jan 1942 had provided for the mines to be kept open and for employees to attend work.

being bound to direction and a limit on earnings just as rigidly as any miner. The coalfields seemed happy. It certainly looked as though Ward was removing some of the causes of discontent which he had defined.

Early in 1942, the Central Council of the Miners' Federation passed what it called a New Year's resolution to give every possible support to the Government in the present grave national situation and to consider favourably all suggestions to ensure maximum coal production. The miners worked throughout the holiday period, as desired by the Government, but in the first week of January more than 7,000 went out on strike and the advantage of the extra effort was lost. The Prime Minister intervened with appeals and with warnings and then with the introduction of new regulations which imposed penalties against any miner who refused to work when the committee of management of his union said he should work.[1] The pill was surrounded with some well-flavoured scolding of the mine-owners and penalties against them if they did not keep the mines open or did not observe award conditions. The obligation was placed on the mine-owner to give the Coal Commissioner the name of any miner who did not attend for work after his union had said he could work and the Coal Commissioner had power to direct that the name of the miner be removed from the List of Reserved Occupations, thus making him liable to be called up for military service.

Though coal stoppages recurred from time to time, often against the advice of union officials, there was undoubtedly an improvement. How far it was due to an appreciation by the miners of the danger from Japan or to the new Government's actions it is impossible to say. Certainly union managements had shown a response to the appeal of national need. At the end of March 1942 the Government could point to a rise of 205,000 tons in stocks of New South Wales coal during its six months in office, as a result of a policy of conservation and of maintaining production.

During January 1942 stoppages on the waterfront and on road transport and in munitions plants also caused concern. A direction by Curtin to the navy to unload a ship at Sydney, and a warning that men who did not work in their protected industry would lose their exemption from military service, brought the stoppages to an end without incident. The Labour Prime Minister spoke bluntly: "The men who are not in the fighting forces and who, at the same time, will not work are as much the enemies of this country as the directly enlisted legions of the enemy," Curtin said. He was also able to reassure them that the Government understood their cause. "The Labour Government stands for justice for the workers. . . . The Labour Government knows Labour principles and stands for them."[2]

Ward spoke of the stoppages as "unjustified strikes". The strikers had apparently no regard for the serious situation confronting their country, had ignored the advice of their union leaders and defied the authority of the Government. "Unfortunately," he added, "there are still many people in this country who either do not recognise the gravity of the inter-

[1] Statutory Rules, No. 10, 9 Jan 1942.
[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 15, p. 21.

national situation or who do not place the safety of the country and its people as paramount to every other consideration. . . . Generally the trade union movement has cooperated with the Government. But sections of unionists, in many cases in defiance of their leaders, have taken action leading to delays in production and interruption to essential services. . . . Men have been released from the obligation of military service because they have been engaged in important war work. Obviously if they cease to be so employed the ground for their exemption from service ceases to exist."[3]

The Minister was reinforced by "a wartime policy for the guidance of industrial unions" which had been adopted by the Executive Committee of the Australasian Council of Trade Unions in Melbourne on 16th December, and which had declared that no stoppages of work should take place unless authorised by the union or unions covering an industry and that stoppages should be sanctioned by unions "only after exhaustion of conciliatory methods". In general the union executives had acted to maintain production and the strikes under discussion involved union discipline as well as the authority of the Government.

Incidentally, the A.C.T.U. Executive had accompanied its ban on unauthorised strikes with a statement of its views on other aspects of wartime industrial policy. Their statement of wartime policy included:

> That improvement be sought in the machinery of arbitration to minimise delay.
> That there be active participation in management and administration to increase production of war materials and eliminate waste and inefficiency, this to be achieved through elected workshop committees, acting in conjunction with the management, and through trade union representation on boards controlling production and distribution, such representation to be selected through the A.C.T.U. or its branches.
> That living standards be secured through a readjustment of wage rates, elimination of wage anomalies, and more rigid control over prices.
> That the employment of women in industry on work usually performed by men be accompanied by safeguards providing that when on such work they be paid men's rates and that men be reinstated on such work when available.
> That consultations between unions and the A.C.T.U. and between the A.C.T.U. and the Government be instituted when necessary to fix a common policy on problems arising from labour shortages and war production.
> That in order that the foregoing policy be implemented, absolute preference to unions operate in all industries.[4]

The Attorney-General, Dr Evatt, was active in a move in another direction to promote industrial peace. On 27th December he presided over a conference of judges and officers of Federal and State Arbitration Courts, employers and employees to discuss industrial relations and means of assisting the Government to maintain continuous production at the highest possible level in all branches of industry. The conference recommended the constitution of an Industrial Relations Council to advise the Government on industrial relations and generally on problems affecting war production and to make recommendations on industrial matters which might

[3] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 Jan 1942.
[4] Metropolitan newspapers, 17 Dec 1941.

be dealt with by National Security Regulations. The council would be composed of eight representatives of employers, drawn from various sections of industry, and eight representatives of the employees. It was originally intended that the chairman should be "the appropriate Minister of State" but when the membership of the council was eventually announced by Ward, he named Sir William Webb,[5] of the Queensland Supreme Court, as chairman.[6] In practice the eight representatives of the employers voted together, and likewise the eight representatives of the employees, while, in the opinion of the employers, the chairman's attitude meant that there would never be a decision in their favour. The unionists charged the employers with "obstructive tactics" and the employers said that they were "not prepared to be used for the purpose of recording trade union decisions camouflaged as joint recommendations". Within a month Ward said that he would go ahead without the aid of the council, which, so far as he was concerned, had collapsed.[7]

Even more urgent than the maintenance of war production and more immediate in its effect in changing the life of thousands of citizens was the building up of the defence forces. On 11th December when the Government announced the call-up of 114,000 men for the army and 5,000 for the Volunteer Defence Corps, the assurance was repeated once again that the militia would not be used outside Australia except in Commonwealth territories or in territories under Commonwealth control. The List of Reserved Occupations was amended.

Before the Japanese attack, the Manpower Priorities Board had started to prepare a "Priority Classification of Industries" as part of a move towards a new manpower policy but, pending the completion of this work, the War Cabinet approved a recommendation to delete from the List of Reserved Occupations another nine trades. The effect would be that men in these industries could now enlist or could be called up within the proclaimed age groups. The nature of the trades indicates how lightly compulsion had yet touched the life of the community. They were brewing, malting and the wine and spirits trade; entertainment and recreation (in which, however, the technicians were still reserved); clothing and dress manufacture; confectionery manufacture; hotels and restaurants; linoleum and floor covering manufacturers; monumental masons; wicker and cane manufacturers; and jewellery manufacture.[8]

Recruiting for the A.I.F., available for service anywhere, jumped as it had always done when the need and the opportunity to serve could be seen more clearly. The monthly figure, which had fallen to 4,016 in October and 4,702 in November 1941 rose to 10,669 in December and

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[5] Hon Sir William Webb. Solicitor-General Qld 1922-25; Chmn Central Sugar Cane Prices Bd 1926-42; Chief Justice of Qld 1940-46; Chmn Aust Industrial Relations Council 1942-45; President International Military Tribunal for Far East 1946-48; Justice of High Court of Aust 1946-58. B. Brisbane, 21 Jan 1887.

[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 13, p. 14 and No. 14, p. 19. See also *Commonwealth Gazette* notice of 8 Jan 1942. The Council was established by National Security (Australian Industrial Council) Regulations, Statutory Rules 1942, No. 1, 2 Jan 1942.

[7] *Sydney Morning Herald,* 24 and 27 Jan 1942.

[8] War Cabinet Minute 1575, 11 Dec 1941, on Agendum 406/1941.

12,543 in January. The figures were by no means as spectacular as in June of 1940, when over 48,000 men enlisted. One cause of this was that, at the end of December, the War Cabinet decided, in effect, that only men not serving in the forces might enlist in the A.I.F.[9] and thus some 200,000 young men were temporarily debarred from volunteering.

The eagerness of the women matched that of the men. An announcement that 1,600 more women would be enlisted for the A.W.A.S. and 2,000 for the W.A.A.A.F. started a rush of applications. The voluntary organisations were besieged with offers of all kinds from women and girls in all stations of life. The advertising of 100 positions for women in aircraft production in Victoria resulted in 500 applications in two days and there were similar results in New South Wales and South Australia.

As the war news became worse throughout January, some citizens rushed ahead with their own measures for the deliverance of Australia. One such measure was the movement for a People's Army which flared into quick enthusiasm with the bad news at the end of the month. The origins of the movement would probably be found partly in the legends of guerilla heroism which were cherished under the left-wing of politics from the time of the Spanish Civil War and which merged into other legends of a "people's war" fought by villagers and peasants in the Soviet Union against the German invaders. The majority of the pamphlets which talked of a People's Army extolled Russia, found analogies between the miners of Cessnock and the miners of the Asturias, and were apt to say that the British armies were always being beaten by the Germans because the heroism of the troops was nullified by a wicked government and an antiquated high command while the Russian armies could not be beaten because they were fighting a people's war under a people's government, in which the entire population was armed and organised to oppose the invader. A number of well-known Australian Communists were among those most active in sponsoring a People's Army.

Yet this was by no means the whole story. The origin of the movement can also be found partly in a purely Australian legend of fighting and bushmanship. Such a chronicler of the outback as Ion Idriess did not need to go anywhere but to the stories and the manners of his own native land to find his inspiration. Lawson had sung of the "Bush Brigades" and the song still echoed in hundreds of Australian minds.

There were others, too, whose enthusiasm was bred in an impatience to be up and doing. Every piece of news of an enemy success only made them want to have a chance to "have a crack at him". Down in Victoria, Major-General Rankin,[1] retired cavalry leader and member of the Federal

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[9] War Cabinet Minute 1636, 30 Dec 1941.
About the middle of 1942 the militia units were instructed that their men might now enlist in the AIF, but without necessarily being transferred to another unit. It took a long time for the paper work involved to be completed. The transfer of most of the officers of the militia was gazetted in July and August; the recording of transfers of other ranks took longer, and it was November 1942 before the results were plainly discernible in the statistics. Recruitment into the AIF recorded in that month was 35,407, made up mostly of 34,675 transfers to the AIF from the Permanent Military Forces and militia.

[1] Maj-Gen G. J. Rankin, DSO, VD. (Comd 4 ALH 1917-18; GOC 2 Cav Div 1937-42.) MHR 1937-49, Senator 1950-56. B. Rochester, Vic, 1 May 1887. Died 28 Dec 1957.

Parliament, was eager to have squads of horsemen, black-trackers, and bushmen ready to harass and shoot down the Japanese whenever and wherever they appeared on Australian soil and took his models from something far older than Spanish guerillas or Muscovite socialists. In the polite Sydney suburb of Turramurra, at the colliery of Aberdare Main near Cessnock, even in Sydney's cosmopolitan King's Cross, meetings were held to form companies. Fifty earnest ladies procured horses and went into the scrub behind Sydney to learn to be fighters. Wheat farmers in the Wimmera district in Victoria planned unarmed combat. Plans fostered mostly, but not wholly, by the eager Communists were in train to weld all enthusiasts into one organisation headed by a People's Army Committee.

It was a demonstration of popular determination, but the Government doubted both the usefulness of the organisation and the motives of some of its sponsors. The military advisers feared that in case of fighting the enthusiasts might even become an impediment. Moreover, there was in existence the Volunteer Defence Corps, designed to give an opportunity for the civilian to take part in home defence. The V.D.C., said the Army Minister on 4th February, was the pivotal point around which centres of resistance could be built up from the civilian population. "There is no justification for private armies in this country and if armies not under Government control were established, the result would be chaotic. Under the circumstances the Government will not allow them." Two days later the Prime Minister confirmed the ban.

> The only army of fighting forces that Australia has is that under the control of the Minister for the Army, consisting of the Australian Imperial Force, the Australian Militia Force and the Volunteer Defence Corps. Any citizen can find a place in one of these three sections of the Australian Army. There is no justification whatever for any organised public movement to enable individuals to find an opportunity for service. A man who is physically fit to be a member of the A.I.F., the A.M.F. or the V.D.C. can easily get into one of these bodies. If he is not physically fit, there is plenty of essential war industry in which he can be of great use.

The movement persisted for some weeks, but the majority of those who were moved to support it readily found their opportunity in the V.D.C. and perhaps the only lasting influence of the agitation for a People's Army was in the effect it had in introducing more unorthodox and original methods in the V.D.C. organisation and training.

The military view was that, while guerilla warfare might contribute to the winning of a battle by harassing enemy communications, battles could only be won by the concentration of the greatest weight of bombs, shells or tanks at the decisive point. The organisation of guerilla bands would cut across this principle of concentration by diverting equipment and by diverting the organising and training efforts of the army. The raising of guerilla bands would seriously deplete the limited stocks of equipment. In a memorandum to the Minister for the Army, dated 30th January

1942, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieut-General V. A. H. Sturdee, spoke critically, too, of the element of despair and the idea of evacuation which was behind much of the advocacy of guerilla activity and indicated the better ways in which the V.D.C. might be used: "The trend of all thought today is evacuation, not only by armies but by the civil population," he said. "Evacuation by armies will never win wars, while the evacuation, either voluntary or involuntary, of the civil population during operations is one of the greatest handicaps to the Commander of an army in the field, particularly from the aspect of congestion on roads and railways. War as waged today is a total war, and the civil population will have to come to regard themselves as being as much in the front line as members of the services. The first essential is to insist that the civil population should remain in their own towns, villages and farms, and the second is to do all we can to instruct the civil population how it can best aid the armed forces by attacking enemy communications, effecting acts of sabotage and the like. The V.D.C. attachments form the pivots around which these centres of resistance can be built up by additions from the civil population."

The army method was to pass as many members of the V.D.C. as possible through its infantry training schools and give them intensive courses in "independent warfare". By March its principal training centre in Gippsland was turning out 220 fully-trained V.D.C. men every five weeks and returning them to their areas of residence to act as instructors to the local V.D.C. units, and other schools had been established in all States.[2]

This corps, originally formed in July 1940 by the Returned Soldiers' League and composed mainly of returned soldiers of the 1914-18 war, rapidly expanded to take in any man between the ages of 18 and 60[3] who, though tied to his civilian employment, was willing to give up his evenings or weekends to training. In May 1941, Army Headquarters took control of this corps. It was given the role of training for guerilla warfare, of providing static defence of the area in which each unit was raised, of guarding key points, and providing local intelligence. At length some of its men took over some of the anti-aircraft and coast defences, thus releasing some thousands of younger troops.

The decision made in early February 1942 to expand the strength of the V.D.C. from 50,000 to 80,000 was the direct result of the advocacy of the Premier of Queensland, who saw this as a necessary move to counteract the popular demand for the creation of a People's Army.[4] The public announcement was to the effect that any men wishing to join the V.D.C. would be accepted, and so keen was the response that by the end of the year it had about 95,000 members, necessitating a further increase in the establishment to 100,000.[5] By December 1942, however,

[2] Department of Army file (not numbered) entitled "Guerilla Training".
[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements* No. 17 announcing Defence (Volunteer Defence Corps) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 38, 2 Feb 1942.
[4] War Cabinet Minute 1882, 10 Feb 1942.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 2531, 7 Dec 1942.

conditions had altered so much that the value of the V.D.C. was seen in a different light. Although Blamey was of the opinion that there was no military necessity to increase the establishment, the Cabinet accepted the opinion of the Minister for the Army that the work of the V.D.C. was "setting an example of service which stiffens to a very great extent the general public's determination to get on with its wartime job" and this good result would be spoiled if some of its men were without uniforms and equipment—one of the chief results of having more members than were provided for in the establishment—and damage "the Government's widespread campaign in favour of sacrifice and increased endeavour".

Many other civilians, both men and women, found opportunity for service in the emergency of January and February 1942 in civil defence measures.[6]

War in the Pacific meant that in all States the work of air raid precautions was accelerated. From early December lighting restrictions were imposed to produce a "brown-out" in all areas with a seaward aspect on the eastern coast. Activity in the provision of air raid shelters increased. The official policy was against the provision of deep air raid shelters. The War Cabinet on 5th February decided that the normal dispersion of the civil population in their own homes provided the best means for their protection rather than congregating them into shelters. In special cases, such as factories in congested or vital areas where large numbers of employees were engaged continuously on essential war work, shelters should be provided in basements, in trenches or in surface shelters. For the most part the country relied on slit trenches. In the Sydney metropolitan area digging began in parks and open spaces on 15th December with a team of 500 men and three mechanical diggers at work. The method was repeated at various cities and towns throughout the country. In backyards householders chopped out with pick and shovel their own slit trenches in dimensions and styles according to their fancy and their energy. In places where the provision could not be made by public authority, parents would form a working bee to dig trenches for the local school. Some were tardy but a month later when worse reverses of Allied armies brought the prospect of attack nearer home they too were scampering to do what the majority had completed in January.

Gradually, too, as realisation of danger grew, the aspect of the cities changed. Plate glass was removed and display windows were boarded up. Doorways and windows were protected by brick screens or sandbags. Projecting masonry or dangerous towers were removed from buildings in busy streets. Heaps of sand were dumped on footpaths and parks to be carried away by residents for use in quelling incendiary bombs. Not only in the headlines but in the highways and byways could be read the story of expectation of coming raids and perhaps of invasion.

In less dramatic ways, too, the meaning of war became apparent. Householders were busy with paper and cloth devising the screens or the drapes

[6] See Appendix 1, "Civil Defence Organisation".

to obscure all apertures in their homes. In dim city streets, car headlights were masked. Barbed wire appeared on the beaches; closed areas were declared; guards were posted. Part of the V.D.C. was called up for coast-watching and defence of aerodromes. A Volunteer Air Observers' Corps was organised and a series of posts manned by volunteers to keep a 24-hour watch and report aircraft movements. The petrol ration was cut by 20 per cent. An order for the impressment of rifles was made. Later small boats of all kinds were impounded either for new official uses or to prevent them from being used by an invader. The Government froze all stocks of hand tools in shops and garages. It became harder to buy "smokes" after the end of December when the distribution of tobacco was reduced except to military and munitions canteens. In order to conserve coal and power, lighting such as display advertising was prohibited; daylight saving was introduced;[7] and the order was given that there should be no "late shopping night" in those cities and towns where this custom existed.[8]

As the Christmas season approached it was announced that, instead of closing down from Christmas Eve until 2nd January, as was the long-standing practice in many works and offices, there should be only three days' holiday and that all must keep at their jobs on the other days—workmen at holiday pay rates if their awards provided for the holiday.[9] Nobody could take annual leave "until the Government intimates that the situation will permit of that being done". There was some protest at this, partly for such ponderable reasons as that the shutting down of works at Christmas was used for the reconditioning of plant and equipment, and partly for selfish reasons. It was necessary for Ministers to meet trade union leaders and counter their protests. They found it necessary to explain in public statements the various ways in which the order would not be quite as irksome as it sounded and to remind Australians that the Japanese were not taking any holidays. "A minority seems to have forgotten," said Evatt, "that, at any time, the country may be raided or invaded and that the fighting forces need urgently every ounce of the materials of defence that can be supplied to them."[1] In the outcome a few unions defied the ban and some workers settled the question for themselves by giving notice to the boss, going off for a holiday as usual and then re-applying for work after the holidays were over.

The States were given National Security powers and were asked to use them to ban mid-week sport, the main purpose being to limit horse-racing to Saturday afternoons. The Commonwealth also wished, for the sake of the conservation of petrol and coal, to limit the use of transport to racecourses. The Government had touched a sacred subject and achieved

[7] National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 323, 24 Dec 1941.

[8] National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 297, 16 Dec 1941. The late shopping night was usually Friday, and shops remained open until 9 p.m. (instead of closing at the usual 5.45 or 6 p.m.) in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Brisbane and Perth had no late shopping night, although in the former shops remained open until 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve and Easter Eve.

[9] National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 297, 16 Dec 1941.

[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements* No. 11, pp. 11-13; No. 12, pp. 3-5; No. 13, p. 10.

little. The argument ended with nothing firmer than an appeal for "common sense". On 8th January, Curtin said that priority must be given to the transport needs of war workers and that due regard had to be paid to the use of coal and petrol for transport for race meetings. "Can't we find some sensible compromise between a total ban and reasonable transport facilities?" he asked.[2] Yet when they did reach the racetrack after their rigorous journeys by suburban train and bus, the racegoers were reminded of the war. To eliminate extravagant use of paper a special order was made on 29th December to limit the size of betting tickets and betting charts.[3]

Private business activities were further restricted by amendments of the National Security (Capital Issues) Regulations to restrict the lending of money for other than war purposes. Stricter control was taken over building and materials, permits being required for any building costing more than £2,000.[4] The issue of licences for sterling imports of a number of commodities had been suspended.[5] By the beginning of February the Department of War Organisation of Industry under its new Minister had got down to work and the restriction of the use of certain materials commenced—fibre and jute goods, rubber, bristles, raw silk were among the first—and plans were in preparation for the prohibition of certain manufactures as being non-essential. The Christmas holiday ban had incidentally revealed how many of these were ripe for condemnation, for one of the pleas by both employers and employees that they be allowed to take the holidays as usual was based on the argument that they were in luxury trades and were not essential to the war effort.

As the Japanese advanced southward the tide of civilian refugees into Australia arose. After the War Cabinet decision to evacuate women and children from Papua and New Guinea—excepting nurses and missionaries who chose to stay—the movement commenced on the 18th at the expense of the Commonwealth Government. Aircraft and ships were used to bring the 1,800 women and children to Queensland ports or Sydney. The flow of refugees from Hong Kong, Malaya and other Asiatic colonies of Great Britain which had been coming into Australia throughout 1940 and 1941 quickened during December and January and was joined by a new flow from the Netherlands Indies. The major imprint on the public mind was made in Western Australia, which received first the volume from the Straits Settlements and Netherlands Indies; and in Queensland which received the volume from Hong Kong and the Pacific islands, before they gradually

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[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements* No. 11, p. 12; No. 12, p. 6; No. 14, pp. 15-16. National Security (Supplementary) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 320, 24 Dec 1941 and succeeding State orders.

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements* No. 13, p. 15. Order No. 13 under National Security (Metal Foil and Paper) Regulations. The 8½ square inches for tickets and 115 square inches for charts was not likely to involve much inconvenience.

[4] National Security (Building Control) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 22, 28 Jan 1942.

[5] *Commonwealth Gazette,* No. 250, 6 Dec 1941. The possibility of placing sterling imports under control had been under discussion as early as May 1940. Items included boots and shoes, furs, perfumery and ready-made clothing.

dispersed over Australia.[6] Their coming spoke vividly to Australians of the approach of war, and in some cases their helplessness evoked a new form of voluntary war effort in housing and assisting the refugee, although in other cases the unfamiliarity of the newcomers with Australian ways and the unfamiliarity of Australians with the type of colonial European who started to take possession of their domain led to friction and to some resentment on both sides.

There was a new movement of population within Australia, perhaps induced to some extent by that which had started from outside her shores. Under the growing fear of invasion more and more city-dwellers began to "take to the hills". The crisis had come during the school holidays and many of those who could afford it sent wives and children to stay in the country and were officially encouraged to do so. As the war news became worse a private rush for safety became more noticeable. Contemporary reports speak of a rush of "some thousands" of people in New South Wales to resorts in the Blue Mountains, Bowral, Mittagong, Katoomba and Bathurst, weekend cottages being sold or rented at high prices and guest houses booked out. In Queensland, the population of Toowoomba was said to have grown by 5,000. In Western Australia, little wheat-belt towns 200 miles from the coast found unusual demands for hospitality from city cousins. According to popular accounts the vanguard of the flight was made up of a large number of the earlier refugees to Australia from Germany and other central European countries but, whatever the proportions may have been, quite a number of native-born Australians were there, too. Ministers themselves helped to stimulate the movement. As early as the first week of the Pacific war State authorities in New South Wales and Victoria were giving wide publicity to their own plans for the evacuation of children and the helpless from vulnerable areas in case of sudden attack and spread the idea that in case of invasion or raid the correct action was to get to some other place quickly.

Talking of petrol rationing on 23rd December, the Minister for Supply and Development, Mr Beasley, counselled car-owners not to use up their ration but to hold petrol in the tanks of cars to meet any emergency. Again on 12th January he warned the private motorist not to forget that his vehicle might be used for the evacuation of his wife and family. "Every family that can evacuate itself lightens the burden of the Government service," he said, and added that "protection is in many instances a personal responsibility".[7] Throughout January, Ministers, particularly Forde, kept the likelihood of invasion in the forefront of the public mind.

[6] It is impossible to calculate with any certainty the number of refugees from the Far Eastern countries who reached Australia. The figures recorded by the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics are 162 persons for the September quarter, 1941; 1,539 for the December quarter, 1941; and 8,138 for the whole of 1942 but the bureau qualifies its figures by saying that "conceivably some thousands could have been missed from the records". In fact, arrivals loosely recorded from time to time by other sources indicate that this was so. For example, a Queensland press report on the work of handling evacuees by official and voluntary organisations spoke in February 1942 of nearly 4,000 evacuees having landed in Queensland, whereas the official figure for the whole of Australia was less than that total. The refugees came by all means of transport but available records for the six months to December 1941 show that about half arrived by air and half by sea.

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 11, p. 10; and No. 14, p. 9.

In making their case for reinforcement Evatt, Makin,[8] Beasley and Forde spoke always of peril and contradicted anyone overseas who argued that the danger was not close and immediate. The picture they gave was of Australia being overrun by a numerically superior enemy. Official propaganda through the Department of Information contributed to a similar impression.

Military leaders became worried over the prospect that, if there were an invasion or raid on the mainland, military operations would be impeded by the movements of the civil population. Closer study also showed the impracticability, having regard to Australian geography and the existing state of transport, water-supply, sources of supply, and industry, of carrying out any planned evacuation from the closely-settled areas. On 4th February, after a meeting of the Advisory War Council attended by the State Premiers and the Chiefs of Staff, the Prime Minister announced the official policy on the evacuation of industry and the civil population as follows:

Approval was given to recommendations by the Defence Committee in respect to industry in the following form:

(1) The evacuation of war industry on any scale that would be worthwhile is impracticable.
(2) New factories, save in exceptional circumstances, should be established inland.
(3) Where possible, key industrial establishments situated in the coastal areas most liable to attack should be duplicated elsewhere either wholly or in part.
(4) Destructible stores and stocks of all kinds should be dispersed and as far as possible located inland.
(5) The provision of adequate air raid precautions measures for the protection of vital factories and establishments to enable production to be continued.

In regard to the civil population it was agreed to adopt the following provisions:

(1) Large-scale evacuation of the civil population in the event of enemy attack or invasion would be detrimental to the morale of the people and should be strongly discouraged both in the interests of the public themselves and for the maintenance of essential production for the civil population and the fighting forces.
(2) Limited evacuation might be undertaken to be confined, as far as possible, to areas contiguous to possible targets and in certain congested areas to the evacuation of young children. Definition of these areas will be made immediately and conveyed by the Prime Minister to the Premiers.
(3) In the first place, evacuation should, wherever possible, be merely to a safer area in the metropolis concerned.

Decisions in respect to the foregoing to be made by the Governments of the States after consultation with the General Officer Commanding of the district concerned.

The declarations and decisions regarding evacuation mean that evacuation is to be undertaken only as a military necessity, but that plans are to be devised in advance so that everything will be ready to deal with the problem when the situation demands it.[9]

The evacuation of women and children from Darwin had been ordered by the War Cabinet on 14th December and began by sea on the 16th.

[8] Minister for the Navy and Minister for Munitions.
[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 17, pp. 7-8.

This was the only official order given for defence reasons during the period under review which concerned the mainland, but there was a general tendency for women and children to leave all mainland northern areas for the south and in the first week of February it was reported that about 6,000 people had already left Cairns and Townsville by train.[1] The movements were precautionary, however, and though in some instances in the south they might have been read as a lack of steadfastness there was no sign anywhere of panic.

The major effect of bad news had been to awaken the nation to a fuller realisation that it was a nation at war and to stiffen the resolution of the people to face and to survive the perils of that war. In the camps, at their work, on A.R.P. patrol or in their homes they were a happier and a more closely knit people than they had been since war began. They knew they were standing on their own ground. They waited for the Japanese to come.

[1] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Feb 1942.

CHAPTER 2

THE ENEMY AT THE GATE, FEBRUARY-MARCH 1942

1—THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

DURING January and early February the Japanese advanced down the Malay Peninsula. They made landings in Borneo, Celebes and Ambon. They spread steadily over the whole of the Philippines. They overran southern Burma.

Singapore fell on 15th February. It had held out for a fortnight instead of the six months mentioned in the British forecasts. In the Battles of the Java Sea and Sunda Strait from 27th February to 1st March the Allies lost five cruisers and most of their few remaining destroyers. The Australian cruiser *Perth* was sunk on 1st March and the sloop *Yarra* on the 4th. In Burma the British forces withdrew up the Irrawaddy from Rangoon. During the first week of March the Japanese occupied Java and the Government of the Netherlands East Indies was evacuated to Australia. On 8th March the Japanese landed at Lae and Salamaua in New Guinea.

Thus, in less than a month, the Malayan barrier had crumbled and the naval forces which had been assembled to hold it had been beaten.

Japanese air raids on the Australian mainland began on 19th February with two attacks on Darwin, and continued through March and April at Darwin, Wyndham and Broome with some hundreds of casualties and damage to shipping, oil installations and aerodromes. In Papua, Port Moresby was attacked from the air in 21 raids during February and during March. In early February New Guinea and Papua passed under martial law.[1]

Almost daily for the first three months of the new year bad news fed the fears of the Australian Government and supported its urgent appeals for aid. Moving with the course of events, the whole emphasis of the Australian war effort changed to the defence of the Australian mainland. Appeals for strengthening the outer barrier gave place to anxiety for the security of the base.

"The fall of Singapore," said the Prime Minister on 16th February, "can only be described as Australia's Dunkirk. It will be recalled that the fall of Dunkirk initiated the Battle for Britain. The fall of Singapore opens the Battle for Australia. On its issue depends not merely the fate of this Commonwealth but the frontier of the United States of America and, indeed, all the Americas, and therefore, in large measure, the fate of the English-speaking world. He would be a very dull person who could not

[1] War Cabinet Minute 1869, 5 Feb 1942; Agendum 82/1942. Gazetted in Canberra 12 Feb; by Administrator in Port Moresby in a Gazette Extraordinary on the 14th (to operate from noon). See also Section 6 of this chapter and Appendix 2, "Civilian Wartime Experience in the Territories of Papua and New Guinea."

discard all his preconceived ideas of strategy and war and who does not accept the fall of Singapore as involving a completely new situation."[2]

The sequence of defeats in early 1942 seemed to Australians at the time to lead up to or flow as a consequence from the fall of Singapore. There the disasters to Allied arms were exposed in one great event. The fall of Singapore shocked the Australian people and Government as the greatest disaster of the war. The loss of over 17,000 servicemen—equivalent, in proportion to population, to a loss of 100,000 by the United Kingdom or 300,000 by the United States of America—brought anxiety into many homes and in one catastrophe removed almost a quarter of the Australian expeditionary forces. That human loss was accompanied by the destruction of a great legend which had sustained most of the popular ideas about Australian security. For at least ten years the idea of an impregnable Singapore, base for a superior British fleet, had been in the forefront of Australian discussion of defence. A small band of professional and amateur tacticians may have had doubts for many years whether this legend had any substance behind it, but the legend was foremost in all public pronouncements and in most popular and political notions regarding the safety of Australia. Earlier in the war, when the A.I.F., the most modern units of the Royal Australian Navy, and thousands of airmen had gone overseas, there had been repeated assurances that, so long as Singapore stood, the Australian homeland would be secure, and promises had been repeated that if ever the need arose Singapore and the fleet would be reinforced so that they would be sure to prevail. Even after Japan struck and, in the disasters of Pearl Harbour and the Malayan coast, it became clear that Allied naval superiority had gone, the certainty that Singapore would hold out for the necessary six months until new strength arrived had been reasserted. The Japanese would never get past Singapore and while Singapore was held the Malayan-Indonesian barrier would stand.

The shock of the fall of Singapore was mingled with some bitterness. It had not been the fault of Australia. She had put in one of her four A.I.F. infantry divisions. It was the fault of someone else. Someone who had not sent the reinforcements in time. Someone who had failed to provide the aircraft. Someone who had bungled supplies. Someone who had planned the whole thing badly. Someone who had not paid enough heed to the warnings and the opinions that Australians had offered beforehand. Neither the Australian Government nor the majority of the Australian people felt at the time that the fall of Singapore was in any way their failure. Rather they had been let down by others. That feeling, a key to the understanding of Australian conduct, was not the response to a moment of defeat. It was the result of an abrupt ending of long years of delusion—the delusion of independence—during which Australia had been asserting independence but had been relying on the protection of Great Britain to ensure Australian survival. Being human, Australians felt, not that they had deluded themselves, but that they had suffered injury because the circumstances in which they could continue proudly independent had

[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 19, p. 7.

vanished. Australia was wounded in her self-respect as a nation and those wounds were very tender.

Furthermore Australia was believed to be in danger. After the fall of Singapore, the Java Sea and Sunda Strait Battle, the overrunning of the Netherlands Indies and the landings in New Guinea, Australia saw the enemy at her threshold. It was known later that the Japanese did not intend to invade the Australian mainland and that by the end of February 1942 were not in a position to mount a successful invasion. But in Australia itself there was at the time a conviction, both among members of the Government and among the people, that the invaders would soon come. The repeated raids on Darwin; the pursuit of refugees from Malaya and Indonesia down the Western Australian coast; the occupation of Timor and Ambon; the assembling of transports in Rabaul harbour; the landings on the New Guinea coast; the occupation of Christmas Island and the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean—what could these be but the preparations for an attempt sooner or later to overwhelm Australia? If Australia were occupied, what chance would there ever be for the Allies to fight back against Japan and deliver the occupied territories of southern Asia? That expectation of early invasion has also to be appreciated if Australian actions are to be understood.

The fall of Singapore precipitated the question which the Australian Government had been vainly, and perhaps clumsily, trying to isolate ever since the Japanese attack. The security of Australia was not only a matter of the safety of the people inside Australia but also one of the corner-stones of Allied victory in the Pacific. Undoubtedly Australian views were dominated by a very lively and natural fear for the safety of Australia itself, and the note of scolding, querulousness and alarm which crept into some of the Australian communications on such subjects as reinforcements and supplies may have made it difficult for the British and Americans at times to appreciate that there was more behind their messages than a narrow Australian concern with narrow Australian needs. Those communications did, however, also express a reasoned estimate of the course of the war and strategical arguments which had come not simply out of the emergency facing Australia but as the fruit of many years' thinking about the possibility of war in the Pacific.

The fear of an invasion of the Australian mainland was extremely acute in Australia between February and June 1942, just as a similar fear had been acute in the British Isles in the second half of 1940, and its influence lingered after the occasion for the fear had passed. As in the case of the British Isles, while the fear lasted the claims of other battle-fronts took second place to the protection of the homeland, and the preservation of the homeland was also seen as vital to the continuance of the war. The assurance that invasion was unlikely was unconvincing to those who stood in fear of it. They did not like to be told that if Australia were taken by the Japanese it could be delivered later. They did not embrace that possibility for two reasons. They did not want to fall under Japanese occupation and they also thought the loss of Australia

would be the loss of a Pacific base which was more essential to Allied victory than any other base. Above everything, however, was that stark issue of survival. Curtin, speaking to the nation on 16th February, said:

> The protection of this country is no longer that of a contribution to a world at war but the resistance to an enemy threatening to invade our own shore. . . . It is now work or fight as we have never worked or fought before. . . . On what we do now depends everything we may like to do when this bloody test has been survived.[3]

2—THE RETURN OF THE A.I.F.

The various elements in the Australian Government's clamour for aid and the way in which anxiety for the safety of Australia mingled with views on the higher strategy of war in the Pacific are revealed perhaps more clearly than anywhere else in the communications that passed between Curtin, Churchill and Roosevelt towards the end of February regarding the diversion of the 6th and 7th Divisions of the A.I.F. from the crumbling A.B.D.A. Command to Australia.

It will be recalled that the two divisions had been withdrawn from the Middle East to reinforce the A.B.D.A. Command and that Wavell's plan was that the 7th should go to southern Sumatra and the 6th to central Java. The two divisions embarked from the Middle East in a manner that, after the rapid turn of events, seriously limited the possibility of using them for the purpose originally intended. They were not tactically stowed; some of them had to be re-stowed in other ships en route; and men and equipment became further separated from each other during the voyage.[4] This fact turned into a significant argument in favour of diverting the divisions to Australia.

The Australian formations sailed from Egypt in several "flights", the first leaving Suez on 30th January and the last on 12th March.[5] By the middle of February, about the time of the fall of Singapore, when the first flight of 17,800 men was in Bombay being re-stowed into smaller ships so as to avoid sending valuable big liners into the danger area, the worsening of the situation in Malaya led to serious concern in Australia whether, in the event of the loss of Singapore, the sending of the A.I.F. to Sumatra and Java would be wise, or whether adequate escorts could be provided to get the men into Indonesia in the face of superior Japanese naval and air power. In a telegram to Wavell on 13th February, discussing the control and administration of the A.I.F., Curtin asked to be kept posted with the situation in the A.B.D.A. Area "as our consent to the present

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[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 19, p. 7.

[4] When the two divisions began to embark in the Middle East the early fall of Singapore was not foreseen. A main problem was to obtain shipping for the move. The staffs in Egypt decided that the most speedy and economical way to use the ships as they became available was to load each group as it arrived, putting men on troopers and heavy equipment on cargo ships and sending them off. "In January," the military historian of this phase has written, "it had seemed that there would be time in Sumatra and Java to sort things out. To have insisted on each part of the force being 'tactically loaded' would have delayed the movement of the Corps as a whole." (See L. Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust* (1957), in the Army series of this history.)

[5] See Appendix 3, "The Return of the A.I.F. and Its Use in the Australian Theatre."

proposal affecting the A.I.F. is necessarily dependent upon the strategic position resulting from the rapidly changing situation".[6]

Wavell understood what was in the Australian mind for, in a conversation with the Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies on the 15th, he warned him that the Australian Government might wish to reconsider the position and might hesitate to commit their best troops to the defence of Java.[7]

In telegrams of the 15th, apparently approved for dispatch before news of the surrender at Singapore had been received, Curtin raised with Churchill the question whether the Allies could hold the Netherlands East Indies.[8] After arguing against a dispersal of forces and stressing the dangers of suffering progressive defeat at point after point, Curtin urged the importance of ensuring the absolute security of the main base. That base was now Australia. Singapore, with a fleet based on it, he said, had been the foundation of the defence of British territories in the Pacific and Far East. As a fleet base it was lost. Australia, as the main base, must now be made secure. It would be in jeopardy until the Allies regained superior sea power and even then could be imperilled by the loss of a fleet action. In the meantime it could be defended either by holding Japan on the outer screen extending from the Netherlands East Indies to New Caledonia or by increasing the local defence strength, part of which would become available for operations outside Australia when strength had been gathered for a counter-offensive. Holding the outer screen at the risk of weakening the defences of the main base would be hazardous if the Japanese could reach the Netherlands East Indies with stronger forces first and it appeared probable that they could do so. Moreover, Japanese sea and air power could greatly limit Allied capacity to reinforce the Netherlands East Indies and to maintain forces there. Until superior sea power and air power were attained by the Allies the resistance to the Japanese in the Netherlands East Indies would probably be limited to the forces already there and such reinforcements as could be readily dispatched, for example, submarines and aircraft. It should, therefore, be urgently considered whether the A.I.F. should be diverted from Sumatra and Java to Australia. The defence of Australia in the short-term period must largely rest on Australian forces, supplemented by forces, and to a large degree equipment, from the United States of America. The question of large-scale assistance to Australian defence by American and Canadian forces had been raised but nothing could be of assistance as quickly as the A.I.F. "When we are ready for the counter-offensive," Curtin concluded, "superior sea power and the accumulation of American forces in this country will enable the A.I.F. again to join in clearing the enemy from the adjacent territories he has occupied."

In developing this case, Curtin also advanced the view that the raising of an Australian expeditionary force for service overseas was subject to

[6] Telegram to Wavell, 13 Feb 1942; repeated to Dominions Office.
[7] Telegram from Wavell to War Office, 15 Feb 1942.
[8] Telegram to Dominions Office, 15 Feb 1942, repeated to Wavell and to Prime Minister of New Zealand; telegram to Page.

the provision of a force for home defence and it was never contemplated that an expeditionary force would proceed farther than Malaya at a time when there was war in the Far East. The A.I.F. had been sent to the Middle East because Japan was not then an enemy. Other reasons he found to support his case for concentrating any Australian expeditionary force in the Pacific were the military advantages from a shorter line of communication and "important psychological considerations which would have a great influence on the morale of the troops and a stimulating effect on the spirit of the Australian people".

At the same time as Curtin was communicating these views to London, the Australian Chiefs of Staff were also studying the situation. A paper by the Chief of the General Staff, also dated 15th February, urged the immediate reconsideration of the future employment of the A.I.F. The present policy of trying to hold isolated islands with inadequate resources should be reviewed. "Our object at the present time," Lieut-General Sturdee said, "should be to ensure the holding of some continental area from which we can eventually launch an offensive in the Pacific when American aid can be fully developed. This postulates the necessity for keeping open the sea and if possible the air reinforcing routes from the U.S.A. This area to be held must be large enough so that, if we are pressed seriously by the Japanese, we will have room to manoeuvre our defending forces and not get them locked up in a series of small localities, e.g. islands, where the garrisons are overwhelmed piecemeal and are consequently lost as fighting resources for the duration of the war. Sacrifices of this nature can only be justified if the delay occasioned to the enemy's advance is such that the time gained enables effective measures to be organised for taking the offensive."

After reviewing the conditions and the resources available, Sturdee found the prospects of the successful defence of Java far from encouraging and observed that in any case Java would not provide a continental base from which to build up Allied strength to take the offensive. The immediate problem was how best to assure the security of Australia, which appeared to be the only practicable base from which the offensive could ultimately be launched. The A.M.F. lacked much of its essential fighting equipment and was inadequately trained at present. The cream of its trained and experienced officers had gone abroad with the A.I.F. and large numbers of its other ranks were in the elementary stages of training. Even when fully trained, a matter of many months, its numbers (300,000) would be inadequate to defend the vital areas within the 12,000 miles of coastline. The return from abroad of 100,000 trained and war-experienced troops of the A.I.F., complete with war equipment and trained staffs, would more than double the present security of the country. He recommended the Government to consider immediately the diversion to Australia of that portion of the A.I.F. which had left or was leaving the Middle East and the recall of the 9th Division and the remaining A.I.F. in the Middle East at an early date.

Just as this paper was being completed, Canberra received from London

a copy of an appreciation, dated 14th February, which Wavell had sent to Washington and London giving a warning of the serious difficulties likely to be faced in Sumatra and Java and the possibility that the unexpectedly rapid advance of the enemy on Singapore and the approach of an escorted enemy convoy towards southern Sumatra might necessitate a complete reorientation of the plans for the defence of the Netherlands East Indies.

Lieut-General Sir John Lavarack, commander of I Australian Corps, had left the Middle East ahead of the first flight and had been in Java with a small staff since 26th January preparing for the reception of the troops. In a message to the Chief of the General Staff on 14th February, the same date as Wavell's appreciation, he raised the doubt whether the Australian divisions, in the circumstances in which they would arrive, would be able to prolong the land defence of Sumatra and Java and questioned whether the delay caused would justify the losses suffered. The 7th Division would probably not be ready for full-scale operations until at least the third week of March and the 6th Division probably not until the middle of April.

The Australian Chiefs of Staff, after reviewing these three military papers by Sturdee, Wavell and Lavarack, expressed the opinion, in a report dated 16th February, that, if possible, all Australian forces now under orders to transfer to the Far East from the Middle East should be diverted to Australia and that Darwin was the first place in Australia that should be reinforced. The recall of the 9th Division, which was in Syria, required early consideration.

Acting on the advice of the Chiefs of Staff, Curtin immediately sent a further telegram to Churchill on the 17th asking for the diversion to Australia of the 6th and 7th Divisions and the British armoured brigade of 3,000 that was with them, and for the recall of the 9th Division at an early date. Next day his action was confirmed by the War Cabinet, which also decided that Wavell should be asked where he intended to use the advance party of 3,400 Australian troops at Batavia.[9]

At the same time, in London and in Washington, the same set of circumstances was being urgently considered with the result that the request by Australia for the diversion of the A.I.F. to their homeland crossed in transit suggestions from both Churchill and Roosevelt that they be diverted to Burma.

The reports from Wavell and the general situation after the surrender at Singapore were discussed in the British War Cabinet and Defence Committee on the 16th and in the Pacific War Council on the 17th. A dispatch received from Wavell on the 16th (but not repeated to Australia by the Dominions Office until the 18th), after reviewing the military situation and the forces available, advised that the landing of the Australian Corps in Java would be an extremely precarious operation, that its maintenance might be difficult in face of enemy air superiority and

[9] War Cabinet Minute 1896, 18 Feb, and War Cabinet Agendum 106/1942.

that success in defence, even if the corps were successfully landed, was extremely problematical. Under the best of conditions the 7th Division could not be unloaded and operative until 21st March. The ships were not tactically loaded and practically the whole convoy must be discharged before the troops were available for action. The loss of Java, though a severe blow, would not be fatal. Both Burma and Australia were "absolutely vital" and efforts should not therefore be made to reinforce Java which might compromise the defence of Burma or Australia. The risk of landing the Australian Corps in Java was unjustifiable from a tactical and strategical point of view.

If the Australian Corps were to be diverted from the Netherlands Indies, Wavell recommended that at least one division—and both if possible—should go to Burma, which should also be strengthened by building up a heavy bomber force. Stronger forces in Burma must have a very great effect on Japanese strategy and a heartening effect on China and India. It was the only theatre in which offensive land operations against Japan would be possible in the near future. It should be possible for American troops to provide reinforcement for Australia if required.[1]

The British War Cabinet and Defence Committee and the Pacific War Council also had before them the telegrams sent by Curtin on the 15th and the 17th stressing the importance of the defence of Australia and asking for the diversion of the 6th and 7th Divisions to Australia and for the early recall of the 9th.

Reporting the results of these meetings in cablegrams dispatched from London in the early hours of the 18th and received in Australia on the afternoon of the 18th, Page said that the whole strategical position in the Far East, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans had been considered. It was unanimously recognised that Australia and India must be preserved as the main bases for operations against Japan, irrespective of what Japan was doing elsewhere, and that the road for supplies to China must be kept open at all costs, both to keep China in the war and because this was the only area in which land operations against Japan could be continued at present. Ultimately the Burma Road and China might be the route through which Japan proper could be directly attacked by air. The Dutch, whose attitude was described by Page as "magnificent", declared that they would fight on to defend Java to the uttermost, but they did not expect the Australian reinforcements to be sent into Java as it was too dangerous a proceeding and would only uselessly waste Allied manpower. The Australian Government's policy of taking the whole of their forces back into the Pacific area and to Australia was accepted, but they were to be asked to agree that the 7th Division, which was already on the water, should go to Burma, which was considered to be "the most urgent spot" at the moment. The 7th Division were the only troops that could reach Rangoon in time and the position of the convoy made it imperative that permission to use the Australians there should be given

[1] Telegrams from Wavell to CIGS and Churchill, 16 Feb; repeated to Australia from Dominions Office, 18 Feb.

within 24 hours. In the meantime the 6th Division, leading elements of which were already embarking, and the 9th Division would go as fast as possible back into the Australian area, the 7th would be reinforced in Burma by the 70th British Division (less one brigade to be retained in Ceylon), which would be the next division to be shipped from the Middle East. Page was assured by Churchill and the Chief of the Air Staff that arrangements were already in train for very substantial reinforcements for Burma.

Page strongly recommended that the Australian Government should concur in this proposal. Among his persuasions were the critical position in Burma, the fact that the 7th were the only experienced reinforcements readily available, the value of holding Burma, the value of giving an indication that the Australians "were taking the widest cooperative attitude to the war", and the assurances regarding the return of other troops to Australia.[2]

His arguments were reinforced by those of Bruce in a personal telegram to Curtin sent on 18th February. Reporting his impression of the Pacific War Council meeting on the 17th, Bruce spoke of the realisation in London of the importance of Australia as a base and expressed the view that Australia could now rely confidently on the maximum support it was physically possible to send her. He presented the following arguments why it was "essential" to agree to the diversion of the 7th Division to Burma. Its presence there would offer the best hope of keeping the Burma Road open and, even if it did not achieve this objective, the sending of the division would have a tremendous effect on China's morale. The continuance of the flow of supplies and munitions to China was of paramount importance for the fight against Japan. Added to what Australia had already done, the diversion of the division to this vital spot would strengthen the Australian position in demanding similar action to meet Australian necessities. He pointed out that the Dutch, by an action which showed great statesmanship and which was in keeping with the character and toughness of the Dutch people, had agreed that the Netherlands Indies should not be reinforced and the diversion to Burma of the division released from Java would be the Australian reply.[3]

Meanwhile, on 17th February, Casey had reported from Washington that the President was becoming depressed at the continuous reverses and had sought advice from his principal advisers as to where a real stand could be made. He had the war against Japan principally, but not exclusively, in mind. Casey had immediately urged in various quarters that the mainland of Australia and New Zealand was the area on which a stand should be made and a firm footing found before setting out to regain the areas already lost to Japan. Considerable discussion was going on in high places about whether the United States should make itself responsible for the formidable reinforcement of Australia and New Zealand, while Britain should be asked to take a similar responsibility for

[2] Telegrams from Page, 18 Feb 1942.
[3] Telegram from Bruce 18 Feb 1942.

Burma and India, without, however, making the division of responsibility exclusive. Mr Harry L. Hopkins, adviser and assistant to President Roosevelt, had asked Casey privately whether, if such a proposal was agreed upon and if the United States undertook to send considerable forces to Australia, Australia was likely to agree to two Australian divisions from the Middle East being diverted to, say, India or Burma, which the President regarded as of great importance. The assumption on which this was based was that it would prove impossible to land the Australian divisions in Java. Hopkins had mentioned at one stage the sending of 50,000 or 60,000 American troops to Australia with their equipment. The inquiry was not a formal one but Casey, believing the matter might be decided in a few days, asked that he be sent a confidential reply to be passed to Hopkins. He also drew attention to the difficulty caused by lack of shipping and reported that, after a review with the Australian shipping authorities, he believed that Australia could forego, in the interest of the transport of troops and equipment, about 25,000 tons deadweight of the space allotted to Australia during March without sacrificing vital war materials such as aircraft, tanks, lubricating oil, machine tools and materials for munitions. The main items of cargo displaced would be wood pulp, sulphur, lumber, newsprint and the like.

Late on the night of the 18th Curtin dispatched from Canberra a reply to Page warning him of the "very strong probability" that the Government would adhere to its decision for the return of the A.I.F. to Australia and that, in the meantime, the convoy should not be committed to Burma. Further advice would be given to him "within the next half day".[4] About the same time as he received this message, Page learnt that Wavell's appreciation of 16th February, on which Page had relied to a large extent in making his recommendation for concurrence in the diversion of the 7th Division to Burma, had not yet been sent from London to Australia and, after arranging for its urgent transmission, he cabled to Curtin begging him to defer a final decision until he had studied Wavell's views.[5]

When the Advisory War Council was informed at a meeting in Sydney on 18th February of the action taken by Curtin to request the return of the A.I.F. to Australia, non-Government members also asked that the question be deferred, and when the subject was resumed on the 19th they had before them the additional telegrams reporting the British and American wish that the 7th Division should go to Burma. The non-Government members were of the opinion that Australia should agree to the recommendation of the Pacific War Council that the 7th Division should go to Burma.[6]

The War Cabinet, however, held to its decision for the return of the A.I.F. to Australia,[7] and in a telegram, dispatched from Canberra at 7.30 p.m. on 19th February, Curtin so instructed Page. Curtin said that,

[4] Telegram to Page, 18 Feb 1942.
[5] Telegram from Page, 18 Feb 1942.
[6] Advisory War Council Minutes 770, 18 Feb and 777, 19 Feb 1942.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 1914, 19 Feb 1942.

after most anxious consideration, the Government had decided that it could not agree to the proposal that the 7th be diverted to Burma. The original intention had been that the A.I.F. divisions were to be sent to the Netherlands Indies to help stop the southern thrust of the enemy. To carry out the same objective the destination to which they should now proceed was obviously Australia, for Australia was the nearest area of concentration south of the Netherlands Indies, was an essential Allied base, and was in imminent danger of attack. Mainly owing to the Australian contribution overseas the home defence position was, in the opinion of the Chief of the Australian General Staff, unsatisfactory.[8]

The War Cabinet took this decision before they had received further London messages repeating messages from Wavell and from the Chiefs of Staff in Washington. On 18th February Wavell had again reported to London the doubtfulness of the defence of Java and again recommended that the Australian Corps, intended for Java, be diverted to Burma. If Burma was unable to receive the whole at present, part should be landed at Calcutta as a reserve for Burma. A heavy bomber force should be built up in Burma as soon as possible for operations against the Japanese line of communication. This report was repeated to Australia but not received there until 20th February.[9]

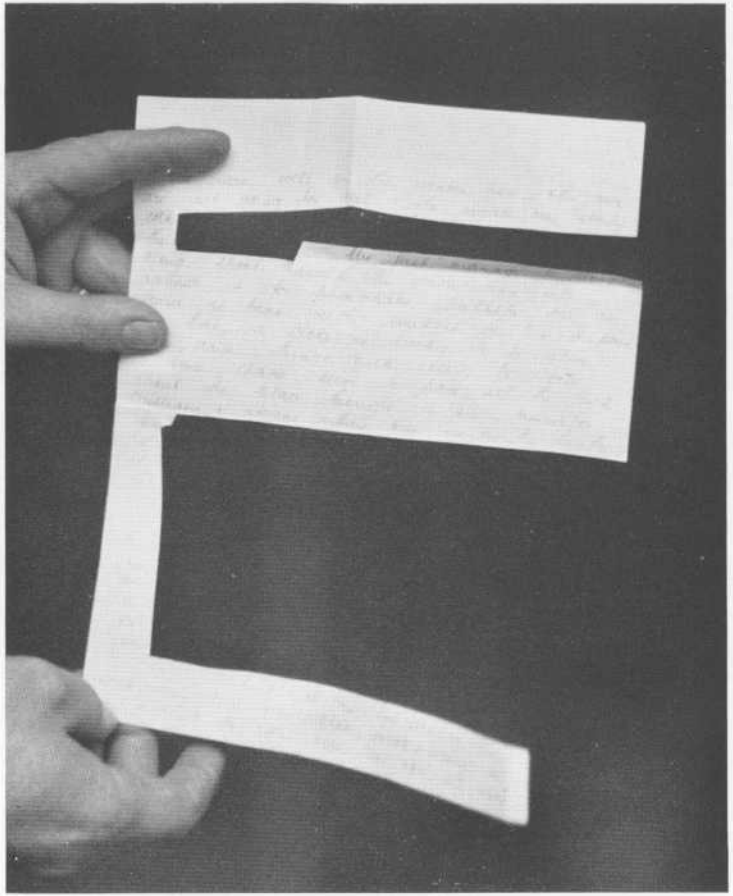
Also on 20th February, Australia received a telegram from the Dominions Office repeating information from Field Marshal Sir John Dill (Chief of the Imperial General Staff), then in the United States, that a division and some base troops would leave America for Australia in early March. In these circumstances would it not be wise to leave the destination of the Australian 6th and 9th Divisions open? Dill asked whether Australia would be prepared to give up one of her own divisions in exchange for an American division.[1]

When Curtin's telegram of the 19th arrived in London Page assumed correctly that the Australian Government had reached its decision before these messages had arrived, and he also assumed incorrectly that his own message of the 18th asking that a final decision be deferred had not been received.

Accordingly, he reported, he was holding Curtin's final instruction secret until he received further advice and no instructions to divert the course of the convoy had been sent. Page reported that he had discussed with Churchill the American offer and Churchill had promised that if the 7th Division were diverted to Burma he would try to expedite the arrival of the American division in Australia. Churchill had expressed great anxiety about the effect on China of not reinforcing Burma.[2]

Curtin told Page to act at once in a telegram which left Canberra shortly after midnight on the night of 20th-21st February (Eastern Australian time). On the evening of the 20th (London time), Page reported that the

[8] Telegram to Page, 19 Feb 1942.
[9] Telegram from Wavell to War Office, 18 Feb, repeated to Australia from Dominions Office, 19 Feb 1942.
[1] Telegram from Dominions Office, 19 Feb 1942.
[2] Telegram from Page, 19 Feb, received 20 Feb 1942.





Australian War Memorial

One of the more irksome though necessary controls imposed in wartime was communications censorship of posts and telegraphs—an army responsibility—which operated through District Censors, of whom there were seven. Their main task was to stop the transmission of information of value to the enemy or likely to impair national morale or adversely affect the war effort.



Australian War Memorial

A.I.F. veterans from the Middle East began to arrive in Australia in the first half of March 1942 and by the end of the month most of the 7th Division was concentrated in South Australia.



Australian War Memorial

Sydney gave the 16th Brigade a tumultuous welcome on its march through the city on 5th September 1942. The brigade was newly returned to Australia after hard fighting in the Middle East and a period of sixteen weeks when it was retained in Ceylon (together with the 17th Brigade) for the defence of Colombo. Six weeks later the 16th Brigade was in action in New Guinea.

Australian decision had been communicated officially to the Pacific War Council and instructions had been issued for the diversion of the convoy to Australia.[3]

On 20th February Curtin had informed General Blamey, who was in the Middle East, that the decision had been made against diverting the 7th Division to Burma and that the destination of the A.I.F. should be Australia. Blamey was asked to return to Australia as speedily as possible, and, before he left, to furnish an appreciation on the position in the Middle East.[4]

The decision against diversion to Burma had been repeated to Washington. Casey reported on 20th February[5] that when he had conveyed the Australian decision to the American Chiefs of Staff and to Hopkins, Hopkins was clearly disturbed and said that he would have to see the President at once. Hopkins said that the President was determined to do everything in his power to maintain the right flank of the India-Australia line and had already ordered General Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, and General H. H. Arnold, Chief of the United States Army Air Forces, to send sufficient forces to Australia to do the job. Thirty thousand American troops for Australia and New Caledonia were due to arrive in Australia in the coming week and an American division would leave the United States in early March. The President placed very great importance on Burma and India and the difficulty was to get troops there without undue loss of time.[6]

Churchill showed similar concern at the decision and, after communicating with Roosevelt, both he and the President addressed final appeals to Curtin in personal messages received in Australia on the 21st.

Churchill pointed out to Curtin that the 7th Division, the leading convoy of which was sailing south of Colombo, was the only force that could reach Rangoon in time to prevent its loss. There was nothing else in the world that could fill the gap, he said. While he was entirely in favour of all Australian troops returning home to defend their native soil, a vital war emergency could not be ignored and troops en route to other destinations must be ready to turn aside and take part in a battle. He did not endorse the American request that Australia should also send the 6th and 9th Divisions to Burma and he promised that if the 7th were diverted every effort would be made to relieve it at the earliest possible moment and let it go on to Australia.

Churchill reminded Curtin that the 18th British Division and other reinforcements, which might have saved Rangoon, had been lost at Singapore, to which they had been diverted by Great Britain "agreeably with [Curtin's] point of view" that to evacuate Singapore would be an inexcusable betrayal. He also reminded him of Australia's hope of American support and the supreme importance which Roosevelt attached

[3] Telegrams to Page, 21 Feb, received in London on 20th; and from Page, 20 Feb, received in Australia 21 Feb.
[4] Telegram to Blamey, 20 Feb 1942.
[5] Received in Australia 21 Feb.
[6] Telegram from Casey, 20 Feb 1942.

to keeping open the connection with China, both because of the effects of the cutting off of China and because the American bombing offensive against Japan could not be started if China were isolated. Very grave effects in Washington would follow if Australia refused to let its troops close the gap which they were actually passing. "I trust that for the sake of all interests and above all your own interests you will give most careful consideration to the case I have set before you."[7]

Roosevelt advanced the thesis that the Allied forces must fight to the limit for their two flanks, one based on Australia and the other on Burma, India and China. Because of its geographical position the United States could better handle the reinforcement of Australia and the right flank. He assured Curtin that the United States was going to reinforce Australia with all possible speed and the United States Navy had begun an operation which would, in a measure, protect the coasts of Australia and New Zealand. The Australian division was the only force available for the immediate reinforcement of Burma and if it could get into the fight at once he believed that it could save what seemed a very dangerous situation. While he realised that the Japanese were moving rapidly he could not believe that any Australian vital centres were in immediate danger. He asked Curtin, in the interest of the whole war effort in the Far East, to reconsider his decision and order the 7th Division to move with all speed to support the British forces fighting in Burma. Australia could be sure that America would fight by her side with all her force until victory.[8]

These appeals were considered at a meeting of the War Cabinet called solely for that purpose in Canberra on 21st February and again it was decided to adhere to the decision that the A.I.F. should return to Australia.[9]

Curtin replied to Churchill on the 22nd insisting on the return of the A.I.F. His reply gives the whole Australian case:

1. I have received your rather strongly worded request at this late stage, though our wishes in regard to the disposition of the A.I.F. in the Pacific theatre have long been known to you and carried even further by your statement in the House of Commons. Page was furnished with lengthy statements on our viewpoint on 15th February, 17th February and 19th February.

2. The proposal for additional military assistance for Burma comes from the Supreme Commander of the ABDA Area. Malaya, Singapore and Timor have been lost and the whole of the Netherlands East Indies will apparently be occupied shortly by the Japanese. The enemy, with superior sea and air power, has commenced raiding our territory in the north-west and also in the north-east from Rabaul. The Government made the maximum contribution of which it was capable in reinforcement of the ABDA Area. It originally sent a division less a brigade to Malaya with certain ancillary troops. A machine-gun battalion and substantial reinforcements were later dispatched. It also dispatched forces to Ambon, Java and Dutch and Portuguese Timor. Six squadrons of the Air Force were also sent to this area, together with two cruisers from the Royal Australian Navy.

3. It was suggested by you that two Australian divisions be transferred to the Pacific theatre and this suggestion was later publicly expanded by you with the statement that no obstacle would be placed in the way of the A.I.F. returning to

[7] Telegram from Dominions Office, 20 Feb 1942.
[8] Telegram from Casey, 21 Feb 1942.
[9] War Cabinet Minute 1915, 21 Feb.

defend their homeland. We agreed to the two divisions being located in Sumatra and Java and it was pointed out to Page in the cablegram of 15th February that should fortune still favour the Japanese this disposition would give a line of withdrawal to Australia for our forces.

4. With the situation having deteriorated to such an extent in the theatre of the ABDA Area with which we are closely associated and the Japanese also making a southward advance in the Anzac Area, the Government, in the light of the advice of its Chiefs of Staff as to the forces necessary to repel an attack on Australia, finds it most difficult to understand that it should be called upon to make a further contribution of forces to be located in the most distant part of the ABDA Area. Notwithstanding your statement that you do not agree with the request to send the other two divisions of the AIF Corps to Burma, our advisers are concerned with Wavell's request for the Corps and Dill's statement that the destination of the 6th and 9th Australian Divisions should be left open, as more troops might be badly needed in Burma. Once one division became engaged it could not be left unsupported and the indications are that the whole of the Corps might become committed to this region or there might be a recurrence of the experiences of the Greek and Malayan campaigns. Finally, in view of superior Japanese sea power and air power, it would appear to be a matter of some doubt as to whether this division can be landed in Burma and a matter for greater doubt whether it can be brought out as promised. With the fall of Singapore, Penang and Martaban the Bay of Bengal is now vulnerable to what must be considered the superior sea and air power of Japan in that area. The movement of our forces to this theatre therefore is not considered a reasonable hazard of war, having regard to what has gone before, and its adverse results would have the gravest consequences on the morale of the Australian people. The Government therefore must adhere to its decision.

5. In regard to your statement that the 18th Division was diverted from Burma to Singapore because of our message, it is pointed out that the date of the latter was January 23, whereas in your telegram of January 14 you informed me that one brigade of this division was due on January 13 and the remainder on January 27.

6. We feel, therefore, in view of the foregoing and the services the AIF have rendered in the Middle East, that we have every right to expect them to be returned as soon as possible with adequate escorts to ensure their safe arrival.

7. We assure you, and desire you to so inform the President, who knows fully what we have done to help the common cause, that, if it were possible to divert our troops to Burma and India without imperilling our security in the judgment of our advisers, we should be pleased to agree to the diversion.[1]

A copy of this telegram was also sent to Roosevelt with a friendly message. When the message was delivered to the President, Casey reported, he simply said, "Well, if they have made their mind up, that's the way it is." He hoped that Australia would be willing to discuss the matters in respect to the last Australians to move from the Middle East and, after saying that the Australian decisions would not affect the movement of the 41st American Division to Australia, went on to speak of the whole problem. He referred to the American combined naval operations east of the Solomons, which would contribute to the security of Australia, and said that his military advisers had swung round to the opinion that it would be exceedingly difficult to attempt to regain the Netherlands East Indies and the other islands step by step using Australia as a base, and they now favoured the plan of building up sufficient forces (particularly air forces) to hold Australia while they made their main attempt against

[1] Telegram to Dominions Office, 22 Feb 1942.

the Japanese eastward from Burma or from the area north of the Bay of Bengal.[2]

From London, however, came the surprising news, in a telegram from Churchill to Curtin, dispatched on the afternoon of 22nd February, to the effect that an order had already been given for the "temporary" diversion of the convoy, which was in the Bay of Bengal, to a northward course. Churchill said that he had been unable to contemplate that Australia would refuse the request which he and the President had made, and moreover he knew that if the ships proceeded on their course to Australia while a decision was being awaited they would either arrive at Rangoon too late or would not have enough fuel to get there at all.

In effect, these British orders meant that the convoy had been kept in the Bay of Bengal so that they would be on hand if the Australian decision were favourable but, as a consequence of this manoeuvre, a further argument was produced in an effort to persuade Australia to change her mind. It was pointed out that some of the ships were too far north to reach Australia without refuelling.

This "temporary" diversion had been made without the knowledge of Page but, after taking up the matter energetically in London, he reported his satisfaction that the delay in informing him was due to "inadvertence" and that the move had its genesis in Admiralty concern over the fuel supplies of the convoy and the expectation of an earlier reply from Australia to the last-minute appeals.[3]

Curtin replied to Churchill firmly. It appeared, he said, that Churchill had treated Australian approval to this vital diversion as merely a matter of form and by so doing had created a situation which added to the dangers of the convoy. He contrasted Churchill's action with the "sympathetic reply" from Roosevelt, who apparently fully understood and appreciated the reasons for the Australian decision. Australia's outer defences were quickly vanishing, Malaya, Singapore and Java were gone or going and now Churchill contemplated using the A.I.F. to save Burma. All this had been done, as in Greece, without adequate air support. The Australian Government felt a primary obligation to save Australia not only for itself but to preserve it as a base for the development of the war against Japan. In the circumstances it was quite impossible to reverse a decision which they had made with the utmost care and which they had affirmed and reaffirmed.[4]

Churchill at once ordered the convoy to go to Colombo to refuel and then proceed to Australia. "My decision to move it northward during the few hours required to receive your final answer was necessary," he said to Curtin, "because otherwise your help, if given, might not have arrived in time." To Curtin's warning that Churchill would be held responsible if anything happened to the convoy as a consequence of the temporary diversion, he replied: "Of course I take full responsibility for my action."[5]

[2] Telegram from Casey, 22 Feb 1942.
[3] Telegrams from Dominions Office, 22 Feb; from Page, 22 Feb and 23 Feb 1942.
[4] Telegram to Dominions Office, 23 Feb 1942.
[5] Telegram 23 Feb 1942.

On the previous day, Wavell, who had relinquished his responsibility for Burma on its reversion to the operational control of India, had made his last plea for its reinforcement. It would not be held by defensive methods, he said. The only prospect of success was a vigorous counter-offensive at an early date and for this the 7th Australian Division was required. If the British and Americans put in all they could in the air they should be able to turn the Japanese airfields in this theatre into graveyards for the Japanese air force. "Burma," he concluded, "is not ideal geographically but represents almost our last chance to show the Japs and the world that we mean to fight."[6]

On 24th February another suggestion for the diversion of the A.I.F. was made. The British War Cabinet, considering the changed position in Java and the loss of Singapore, became concerned at the vulnerability of Ceylon, which was now considered to be in danger of capture by Japanese land forces brought by transports from Singapore. Ceylon was regarded as essential for the control of sea communications in the Indian Ocean including the route taken by reinforcements and supplies to the Middle East, Australia, India and Burma and China. In the hands of an enemy Ceylon would also be a threat to the vital oil supplies from Abadan in the Persian Gulf. Trincomalee and Colombo were both required as bases for the Eastern Fleet. Its air and anti-aircraft defences were weak but reinforcements were on the way. Its garrison consisted of the headquarters of the 34th Indian Division, two brigades of Indian infantry, one battery of field artillery, one anti-tank battery and the equivalent of one brigade of local troops. Reinforcements consisting of one brigade group of the 70th British Division were due to arrive in the middle of March, and one Indian armoured car battalion was due in April.

After the experience over Burma the British War Cabinet did not raise the question of assistance from Australia but Page took on himself the responsibility in a personal telegram to Curtin of suggesting that, as the convoy carrying the 7th Australian Division was to refuel at Colombo, the Australian Government should offer to allow these troops to remain in Ceylon at least until the 70th British Division could arrive and get into battle order—a period of say a month or six weeks.[7]

An interim reply, sent to Page on the 25th, made the point that, whether the question was the defence of Burma or of Ceylon, there was still the fundamental need for strengthening the local defence of Australia. The Japanese were just as likely to move against Australia as to move against Ceylon and there were capital ships in the Indian Ocean available to defend Ceylon. There were numerous geographical centres where an A.I.F. or other division would be useful but, from Curtin's point of view, there was none east of Suez of greater importance than Australia.

The Australian Chiefs of Staff to whom the suggestion was referred, together with advice from Lavarack regarding the method of loading the 6th and 7th Divisions, endorsed the views of the British War Cabinet on

[6] Telegram from Wavell, 22 Feb. Repeated to Australia 23 Feb 1942.
[7] Telegrams (2) from Page, 24 Feb 1942.

the importance of Ceylon and added the points that, if Ceylon fell, it was unlikely that the A.I.F. still in the Middle East could be returned to Australia and that Australia's oil supply would probably be limited in future to that obtainable from America. From the information at their disposal they estimated that an attack by combined forces could be launched by Japan on Ceylon in the near future, and that the forces available would be inadequate, without land and air reinforcements, to meet such an attack. Provided the fighter cover forecast for early March was available, the Chiefs of Staff considered that the immediate addition of one division to the land forces would considerably increase the Allied chances of holding Ceylon and the chances would be greatly strengthened if bomber forces capable of attacking enemy convoys at sea could be made available by the United States. The only additional army reinforcements immediately available were the four brigade groups of the A.I.F. en route to Australia. Although there was some mixture of corps troops and the 6th and 7th Divisions and the ships were not tactically stowed, it was considered that a division with its equipment could be disembarked at Colombo and assembled in reasonable time. It would be immaterial which three of the four available brigade groups were employed. After studying the effect of the diversion on the defence of Australia, the Chiefs of Staff considered the risk of diversion was justified. They did not consider an attack on the east coast of Australia likely until Port Moresby and New Caledonia had been seized by the Japanese and the Anzac naval forces defeated, nor on the west coast until the A.B.D.A. forces had been eliminated. The immediate danger to the mainland was at Darwin. "Insofar as Darwin is concerned, until the port facilities are restored and air protection is available" (Darwin had been bombed on the 19th) "we cannot increase the forces in that area unless the land communications are reasonably increased. We can replace the A.M.F. now there by A.I.F., but this is a long process, as it takes approximately one month to move one brigade group over the Central Australian lines of communication and then only by the exclusion of a large proportion of stores now so urgently required. The diversion of a division to Ceylon would, in effect, delay the replacement of troops at Darwin a comparatively short period."

Accordingly the Australian Chiefs of Staff recommended that, if the British Government made a request for the temporary retention of an A.I.F. division in Ceylon, one A.I.F. division should be retained there on condition that the remaining two brigade groups of the 6th Division, at present awaiting embarkation in the Middle East, were dispatched to Australia, the 9th Division was returned to Australia from Syria at the earliest possible date, and that the maximum possible fighter cover and bomber force were provided in Ceylon and south India.

This appreciation and the agendum to which it was attached were dated 28th February, but, although a War Cabinet meeting was held on that day, the suggestion was not considered until 2nd March. On that day the War Cabinet also had before it a supplementary paper dated 2nd March and enclosing a minute by the Chief of the General Staff, dated 28th

February, but containing later information than the Chiefs of Staff paper of the same day. This minute said that as the first two "flights" of the A.I.F. convoy were so far on their way to Australia and 26 of the 54 ships had either left or passed Colombo, it would seem impracticable to divert any of them to Ceylon; consequently, if the United Kingdom should request the use of part of the A.I.F. for garrisoning Ceylon, it could only come from the two brigade groups of the 6th Division which had not yet embarked from Suez.

Basing its decision very largely on this supplementary paper, the War Cabinet decided to make available for the temporary reinforcement of the garrison at Ceylon the third "flight" of the A.I.F. (i.e., the two brigade groups of the 6th Division which had not yet embarked). It was directed that in communicating this decision to Churchill and Roosevelt, Curtin should refer to the necessity for providing adequate air support in Ceylon, and for returning the two diverted brigade groups to Australia as soon as possible after their relief; and that he should also remind them of the promise to return the 9th Division to Australia with a proper escort as soon as possible.[8]

3—THE DEFENCE OF AUSTRALIA

The effect of the loss of Singapore on Australian thinking can be further illustrated by the decisions on higher policy made during February and March for the defence of the Australian mainland.[9]

The General Officer Commanding the Home Forces, Lieut-General Sir Iven Mackay, who had been appointed to that post in September 1941, submitted to the Minister for the Army on 4th February 1942 a memorandum on the defence of Australia in which he asked for recognition of the principle of concentration of effort and for the concurrence of the Government in the view that certain areas were vital and that, in the event of an attempted invasion by the Japanese, efforts must be concentrated on holding them. Other places must be looked upon as "isolated localities". The area most vital to the continuance of the war effort of Australia was the Port Kembla-Sydney-Newcastle-Lithgow area. The importance of Brisbane had been much enhanced by the decision to develop there an important base for United States forces, and the economic and military importance of Melbourne was recognised. This Melbourne-Brisbane region, extending over 1,000 miles from north to south, had scarcely three divisions to defend it, if the forces in northern Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania were excluded. The holding of it would be jeopardised if forces had to be stretched in an attempt to provide for the complete defence of isolated localities. Any call for dispersal of troops must be resisted if the defeat of the Australian Army in detail was to be prevented, and it should be recognised that it might become necessary to submit to the occupation of certain areas of

[8] War Cabinet Minute 1934, 2 Mar 1942. Agendum 106/1942, Supplements 1 and 2. See also Appendix 3, "The Return of the A.I.F. and Its Use in the Australian Theatre."

[9] See D. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*.

Australia by the enemy. In particular Mackay asked for confirmation of his proposal not to attempt to defend either Tasmania or Townsville with more troops than were already in those areas. The reasons why he found it undesirable to reduce the existing garrison at Townsville or withdraw the troops from Tasmania to the mainland were reasons of "morale and psychology".[1]

The Chief of the General Staff, in concurring generally with Mackay's views, stated the problem as "not what we can move out of the vital area to protect, say, north Queensland or Tasmania or Western Australia, but whether we may not have to, or should not now, take troops away from those areas to increase our strength at the decisive place". His view, too, was that the defence of the vital area should not be compromised by detaching forces which could not subsequently be concentrated in time to be used decisively.

The Minister for the Army, himself a representative in Parliament of a northern Queensland constituency, found these military arguments so disturbing that he referred them to the War Cabinet on 17th February with a recommendation that "the policy of the Government should now be defined as a determination to defend the whole of the populated areas of Australia to the utmost of our ability, and to prevent the enemy by every means within our power from obtaining a foothold on our shores". He also suggested that the two generals had not appreciated all the factors affecting the defence of Australia, including the part that the United States might take in its defence, and he further recommended that the Chiefs of Staff and the G.O.C. Home Forces should furnish an appreciation on the defence of Australia on the assumption that the Government's policy was to defend the whole of the populated areas.[2]

The War Cabinet decided on 18th February that the memorandum by Mackay was a matter which should be considered by the Chiefs of Staff before being submitted to the War Cabinet and, at the same time, it directed the Chiefs of Staff to submit a fresh appreciation on the defence of Australia. The appreciation was to pay regard to the importance of holding Australia as the main base in the south-west Pacific for the development of counter-offensive action against Japan with American assistance and to consider the strength and disposition of the forces necessary for the defence of Australia, taking into account both the return of the A.I.F. and the possibility of American and Canadian reinforcements.[3]

This decision was taken at a time when Singapore had fallen and advice

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[1] For an examination of the political controversy which subsequently developed over the so-called "Brisbane Line" see Appendix 4, "The 'Brisbane Line'—a Study in Wartime Politics."

[2] War Cabinet Agendum 96/1942.

[3] War Cabinet Minute 1897, 18 Feb 1942. The hope for Canadian reinforcements was never realised. The possibility had been discussed between the Canadian High Commissioner in Canberra and the Australian Chiefs of Staff in mid-January and soundings were made in Ottawa by the Australian High Commissioner. In the light of these discussions the War Cabinet decided, on the recommendation of the Advisory War Council, to initiate discussions with the Canadian Government for the supply of equipment, the establishment in Australia of a Canadian army force, to be a G.H.Q. Mobile Reserve in Australia, and the transfer to the Australian naval station of a number of fully manned and equipped naval units suitable for local defence. Discussions followed briefly but without result. Advisory War Council Minutes 668, 12 Jan; 683, 20 Jan; War Cabinet Minutes 1718, 20 Jan and 1852, 5 Feb; War Cabinet Agendum 31/1942.

had been received from Wavell that Java could not be held and when the War Cabinet was resisting requests to divert part of the A.I.F. temporarily to Burma. On the following day the first enemy air raid on Darwin emphasised the threat to Australian territory and lives, and the Government revealed its own state of mind more than that of its people when it took exceptional measures to minimise the severity of that raid for fear that the truth might cause a panic.

Non-Government members of the Advisory War Council had previously been showing some apprehension regarding the adequacy of the defences of northern Queensland,[4] and the decision to seek a new appreciation from the Chiefs of Staff was communicated to them.

The defence of Australia, however, had wider implications than the disposition of land forces within the continent. It had to be considered, too, in conjunction with the defence of a whole region. Mackay, charged with the command of the Home Forces and being concerned only with the limited force of six divisions placed at his disposal, had rightly considered how these forces could be used most effectively. The security of the whole Australian continent or any vital part of it did not, however, rest solely on the Australian field army nor could it be properly considered apart from a wider strategy. The generals might be prepared to abandon Western Australia for the sake of the Melbourne-Brisbane area, but what effect would that have on the situation in the Indian Ocean? They might be prepared to defend Sydney with everything they had, but how far did the security of Sydney depend upon the security of New Zealand and the waters of the Tasman Sea? The defence of the Australian continent merged into wider strategical questions and the disposition of forces and allocation of commands in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The special relationship with New Zealand was brought to a head at a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 23rd February attended by two New Zealand Cabinet Ministers, Messrs Sullivan[5] and Coates,[6] who were visiting Australia on a supply mission. New Zealand, like Australia, also saw the importance of developing its territory as a United Nations base for the eventual counter-offensive against Japan. The council discussed the formulation, as between Australia and New Zealand, of a common Pacific strategy and it was agreed that the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff should join with the Australian Chiefs of Staff in a further appreciation covering the newly-created naval command known as the Anzac Area. They were asked to recommend a plan and principles for joint action, including the allotment of forces and materials.[7]

To appreciate fully the situation between Australia and New Zealand it will be necessary to go back over a period of five or six weeks to recount the discussions which had been taking place regarding the Anzac Area.

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 744 (4), 11 Feb, and 768 (2a), 18 Feb 1942.
[5] Hon D. G. Sullivan. Minister of Industries and Commerce 1935-47; Acting Prime Minister in 1942 and 1944. B. Christchurch, NZ, 1882. Died 8 Apr 1947.
[6] Rt Hon J. G. Coates, MC. Prime Minister 1925-28; Member of War Cabinet 1940-43. B. Matakohe, NZ, 1878. Died 27 May 1943.
[7] Advisory War Cabinet Minute 780, 23 Feb.

Following the talks at Washington with Roosevelt, Churchill informed Curtin of the proposal agreed to by Roosevelt and the United States Naval Staff to establish a new naval area to be called the "Anzac Area".[8] After reference to the Australian Chiefs of Staff and the Advisory War Council, the Australian Government, which initially was providing a substantial part of the forces for this area, agreed to the proposal but, in doing so, stressed the fact that occasion might arise for Australia to make a special call on the Anzac Area for the local naval defence of Australia and the protection of convoys to and from Australia, including convoys from Australia to the A.B.D.A. Area. Australia also wanted to know what was contemplated in regard to the naval protection of the area to the west of the Anzac Area and the coast of Western Australia and foreshadowed the need for much stronger forces in the area in view of the intention of the Americans to undertake the defence of New Caledonia, the recent appearance of a threat of Japanese attack on Rabaul and the importance of Australia as a base for the eventual counter-offensive.[9]

The naval forces allocated to the Anzac Area were to be under the strategical direction of the Commander-in-Chief United States Fleet, Admiral Ernest J. King, located in Washington, exercised through a United States flag officer assisted by a flag officer of the R.A.N. Vice-Admiral Herbert F. Leary assumed command of Anzac Force. The Royal Australian Navy contributed to the Anzac Area: *Australia, Canberra, Adelaide,* three armed merchant cruisers, two destroyers and eight anti-submarine vessels; New Zealand contributed *Achilles, Leander* and one armed merchant cruiser; the United States one heavy cruiser and two destroyers; and the Royal Navy the aircraft carrier *Hermes.*[1]

Early in February, New Zealand suggested to the United Kingdom that the Anzac Area should be extended and that unified control for land, sea and air forces should be established in the area. On 8th February the United Kingdom communicated to Australia recommendations by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, to which Churchill had agreed in principle, for extending the Anzac Area to include the islands within its boundaries, New Zealand and that part of Australia that was not within the A.B.D.A. Area. They also recommended that, instead of the command of the Anzac Area being a purely naval command, it should cover all Allied land, sea and air forces within the area.[2] It was thought that the Supreme Commander in this area might be an American naval officer and that he might have subordinate commanders for land, sea and air, as in the

[8] The limits finally agreed to for the Anzac Area were: (a) On north and east, from meridian 140°E on the equator along the equator to 170°E, thence to a position 20°S 175°W, thence due south; (b) on west, from meridian 140°E on the equator south down 141°E to south coast of New Guinea, thence eastwards along south coast to 143°E meridian, thence due south in sea areas only.

[9] Telegram to Churchill; Advisory War Council Minute 689 and War Cabinet Minute 1714, 20 Jan, and War Cabinet Agendum 34/1942.

[1] Weekly Progress Reports by Chiefs of Staff, week ended 14 Feb 1942, War Cabinet Agendum 92/1942.

[2] Telegram from Dominions Office, 8 Feb 1942.

A.B.D.A. Area, and receive his general strategic instructions through the same channels as Wavell.

This proposal would have had the effect of placing most of the Australian mainland and the Tasman Sea under one unified command and north and north-western Australia under another command and would have left the naval protection of the west coast of Australia to yet another authority.

The Australian Chiefs of Staff recommended acceptance of the proposals on condition, first, that a Pacific Area, comprising the whole of the Pacific outside the Anzac and A.B.D.A. Areas, was also created and also brought under the direction and control of the Chiefs of Staff in Washington and, second, that Australian commanders, subject to the Supreme Commander, were given command of the combined land and combined air forces in the Anzac Area. The reason for the first condition was to ensure that there was coordinated control over both the United States Pacific Fleet and the naval forces in the Anzac Area. The proposals were regarded favourably because they might attract American forces into the Anzac Area. The possible objections were that Australia might lose the absolute control of the forces raised for the defence of Australia and receive only a voice in their control.

The proposals and the comments of the Australian Chiefs of Staff were brought before the Advisory War Council on 11th and 18th February but consideration of them was deferred and then merged into the more general discussions between Australia and New Zealand regarding future policy and strategy in the Pacific.

It was against this background that the Advisory War Council and the two New Zealand Ministers asked on 23rd February for a joint appreciation by the Australian and New Zealand Chiefs of Staff.

The paper, dated 26th February, which was prepared by the Chiefs of Staff under the title "Future Policy and Strategy for Conduct of War in the Pacific—Australian and New Zealand", described the existing position as follows:

> The present position of the war in the Pacific is that, in the west, Malaya and Singapore have fallen, the Japanese have invaded Burma and are now threatening Rangoon and the Burma Road; in the south-west, Borneo, Celebes, Sumatra, Ambon and Timor have been occupied and an attack on Java is impending, Darwin has been attacked by air and an attempt to occupy it is not unlikely; further to the east, New Britain, including Rabaul and New Ireland, are in Japanese hands and the enemy force in that area immediately threatens Port Moresby, New Caledonia and Fiji.
>
> The Japanese have decisive air superiority and control of the seas in the areas in which they are operating and there is no present prospect of the main Japanese fleet being successfully brought to action by the fleets of the Allied Nations.
>
> Australia and New Zealand are therefore in danger of attack. Their loss would mean the loss of the only bases for offensive action by the Allied nations against the Japanese from the south-east. The fall of Burma would increase their already great importance.

The appreciation which followed, however, tended to concentrate on the Tasman Sea area in the same way as the earlier Australian discussion

of the land defences of the continent had tended to concentrate on the east coast of Australia. The immediate problems were defined as:

(*a*) To secure the lines of communication from the United States to Australia and New Zealand by holding New Caledonia and Fiji.

(*b*) To prevent the further southward movement of the enemy into Australia, either from New Britain via New Guinea or from Timor through Darwin.

When these ends had been attained, it would be possible to plan offensive operations in the light of the situation then prevailing, including that in the western Pacific. In the event of failure to hold New Caledonia and Fiji, it would be a primary necessity to ensure the integrity of the North Island of New Zealand. Taking this as the basis of planning, the joint report then proceeded to make recommendations regarding the extension of the Anzac Area, and the establishing of a supreme command over it. These matters are dealt with below.

After this appreciation had been discussed in the Advisory War Council on 27th February, however, the Chiefs of Staff revised it.[3] The major revisions related to the details of the suggestions for the Anzac Command but one significant revision in the earlier part of their paper was to add the words "or down the west coast" to the second of the two problems they had defined, so that it read: "To prevent the further southward movement of the enemy into Australia either from New Britain through New Guinea or from Timor through Darwin or down the west coast."

On 27th February the Advisory War Council also asked for the completion of a new appreciation by the Australian Chiefs of Staff on the defence of Australia. This appreciation, dated 27th February, was based, as the Chiefs of Staff emphasised, on the situation as it existed and on the resources actually available at the date of writing, and some variation might be possible when projected reinforcements arrived. The courses of action now open to Japan were seen as follows:

(*a*) To consolidate and exploit the territories already conquered or in process of conquest, using sea and air power to prevent—
  (i) any attempt to break through the Malay Barrier from the south or west;
  (ii) any attack on her lines of communication southward from Japan from the east or south-west.

(*b*) After the capture of Burma, to carry out offensive operations against the east coast of India.

(*c*) An attempt to capture Australia and New Zealand, not so much from the aspect of economic exploitation as from a desire to deny these territories to us as bases for future Allied counter-offensive action.

All the above courses would be accompanied by widespread attack by surface craft, aircraft and submarines against shipping in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

It was thought that any attack on Australia by Japan would have the objects either of capturing the vital area between Brisbane and Melbourne or capturing key points on or astride the lines of communication from overseas to the vital area. A third object, which had a particular reference

[3] Advisory War Council Minute 800, 27 Feb 1942.

to Darwin, might be the occupation by the enemy of a forward base which, if left in Allied hands, would provide a jumping off place for future offensive operations against Japan. The possible lines of approach by Japan were southward from the Japanese mandated territories down the east coast; south-eastwards from the Netherlands East Indies on northern Australia; and southwards from the Netherlands East Indies on south-western Australia. The Australian forces were everywhere inadequate to meet the scale of attack that might be brought against them. It was estimated that the minimum required to defend the whole of Australia, at the existing state of the naval defences, was an army of 25 divisions and an air force of 64 first-line squadrons and 9 transport squadrons. There were available the equivalent of about 11 divisions and 15 first-line squadrons.

The Chiefs of Staff said that an attack designed to occupy Darwin might be expected early in April. The Japanese could use two divisions and could support them by at least four aircraft carriers carrying about 200 aircraft and escorted by heavy cruisers, together with about 100 shore-based aircraft from Ambon, Koepang on Timor and Namlea on Buru Island. (A later British estimate spoke of 200 shore-based aircraft.) To face such an attack there was at Darwin a land force of about two-thirds of a division, six 6-inch guns and 22 heavy anti-aircraft guns; two squadrons of Hudsons (under strength), one squadron of Wirraways whose equipment needed reconditioning, and two American squadrons of Dauntless dive bombers. An American squadron of Kittyhawk fighters was expected to be available about 15th March and two more American fighter squadrons by early April.

An attack designed to occupy Port Moresby might be expected in a week's time and in it the Japanese could employ one division supported by two carriers and approximately 90 land-based aircraft. Apart from the naval forces that might be made available from the Anzac Command and the United States Pacific Fleet, they would be met by a brigade group, two 6-inch coast defence guns and 10 anti-aircraft guns and air forces consisting of 6 Catalinas, 7 Hudsons and 12 Wirraways. A squadron of American Kittyhawk fighters lent to the R.A.A.F. by the United States would be available about 15th March.

The attack on the east coast, which would not be expected until after Port Moresby and New Caledonia had fallen, might be made in May and by that time it was thought that the Japanese would have reinforcements available from the Netherlands East Indies. To meet this there were the equivalent of about 9 divisions, 25 garrison battalions, and coast and anti-aircraft defences and 8 squadrons of aircraft, including 4 of Wirraways and 2 of Hudsons which were not fully equipped.

No exact estimate was made of the prospective scale of attack or the time of the attempt against Western Australia. The local forces consisted of a brigade group, four garrison battalions, coast and anti-aircraft defences and one squadron of Hudsons and one of Wirraways. A United States fighter squadron was expected to arrive by the end of March. Owing to

its distance from the east coast this area could not be quickly reinforced by the army.

It was considered that, "with the forces at their disposal and bearing in mind the importance of the vital area on the east coast which is to be held at all costs", the present dispositions were the most satisfactory that could be made, except that it was recognised as necessary to increase the army garrison at Fremantle and increase the anti-aircraft defences at Townsville. The "other outlying areas"—Port Moresby, Darwin and Tasmania—should not be reinforced but no withdrawals from these places should be made. The reasons for not making withdrawals before attack were twofold—the probable effect on public morale and the policy of trying to hold on to each outlying base as long as possible and exacting a heavy toll from the enemy.

The enhanced value accorded to Fremantle, compared with earlier army proposals, largely resulted from a naval view of its importance as a potential fleet base, its fuel stocks, and the expectation that naval forces from the A.B.D.A. Area and from the Eastern Fleet would operate from there for harassing enemy naval units in the Indian Ocean, protecting Allied shipping and acting as a deterrent to invasion. In consequence of this view the army admitted that an increase in the garrison was essential because of the difficulty of rapid reinforcement if and when an attack was impending. The importance of Townsville was recognised because of its position on the route by which reinforcements could be sent to Port Moresby, as a base for attack on enemy operations against Port Moresby and as a main northern air base on the coast of Australia where striking forces could meet the threat of landing operations in the northern area. At the same time it was not considered that any further army reinforcements should be sent to Townsville at present except more anti-aircraft defences. The forces protecting it were not adequate to meet the scale of attack which could be brought against it during a main Japanese southward movement, but its isolation and the danger that it might be cut off from the south meant a danger that any reinforcements sent to Townsville could not subsequently be concentrated in the Brisbane-Melbourne area, where the main Japanese threat might ultimately develop.

With the arrival of reinforcements, the Chiefs of Staff thought, these dispositions would be considerably varied. By the end of April two A.I.F. divisions and a United States Army division could be expected and, by the end of May, a third A.I.F. division. This would make possible an increase from two brigade groups to a division in Darwin, an increase from one brigade group to a division in Western Australia and the addition of another brigade group in Tasmania, leaving "more than two divisions available to increase the reserve for the defence of the vital area from Brisbane to Melbourne". By the end of April it was expected that there would be sufficient fighter aircraft in the country to form three squadrons which would be located one each at Port Moresby, Townsville and Sydney; and, from the middle of March until these squadrons became available for action, three squadrons lent by the United States could carry out the

same duty. Subject to American agreement there was a further possibility of forming two fighter squadrons for the defence of Darwin from United States aircraft originally intended for the A.B.D.A. Command.

Even with prospective reinforcements, however, it is clear that Australian service thinking was still governed by the military task of ensuring the security of the "vital area" on the east coast. They proposed to concentrate there, in addition to the nine divisions already held, more than half of the new land forces likely to become available at an early date, and they had not essentially varied the prospect that any large-scale Japanese attack on the west or the north or on Tasmania would be resisted as long as possible by forces available locally until the defenders were overwhelmed, and that the movement of any troops out of the Brisbane-Melbourne area would be governed entirely by the principle of concentration of strength to ensure the security of the "vital area". They were prepared to hope that the defence of the west coast would be ensured mainly by the deterrent effect of whatever American or British naval forces might be in that area.

When their appreciation came before the Advisory War Council on 5th March the main points seized on by the council were the policy advocated by the Chiefs of Staff in regard to Port Moresby and Townsville, the possibility of Japanese attack on north-west and Western Australia and the measures for defending Western Australian bases, and what the council minute described as "the inadequate treatment in the appreciation of strategical probabilities and the disposition of our existing forces to the greatest advantage".[4] At the next meeting of the council, nearly a fortnight later, after the Chiefs of Staff had been given the opportunity to amplify and explain their appreciation to council members, the council summarised its views:

(*a*) It was affirmed that Darwin and Port Moresby should be defended to the fullest possible extent and that every endeavour should be made to provide the forces required to ensure adequate defence of these localities.
(*b*) The movement of military forces from southern parts of Australia (e.g. Victoria) to northern areas (e.g. southern Queensland) was affirmed.
(*c*) The forces and defences at Fremantle should be strengthened in view of its development as a naval base.
(*d*) Continuous pressure should be exerted to build up naval and air forces to provide the strengths laid down in the Chiefs of Staff appreciation on the defence of Australia—especially for northern Australia and New Caledonia.
(*e*) The Navy should provide sea communications to Darwin, to ensure the maintenance of adequate supplies.[5]

The Australian appreciation was examined in due course by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff Committee, to which it had been communicated by Curtin through Page. Their report, which in accordance with the existing arrangements for the higher direction of the war was passed directly to the Chiefs of Staff Committee in Washington, was completed a month later than the original Australian appreciation and that fact, as well as the fact

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 812, 5 Mar 1942.
[5] Advisory War Council Minute 842, 18 Mar 1942.

that they were viewing the situation from afar, may explain in part why it made a different basic assessment of the situation. To the Chiefs of Staff Committee in London it appeared at the end of March that Japan clearly intended to capture Port Moresby and probably Darwin, too, but they doubted very much whether she would then attempt a large-scale attack on Australia and New Zealand. The major operations which Japan might have to face were (*a*) invasion of India, (*b*) of the Pacific Islands or of Australia or (*c*) war with Russia. Operations against India and China from Burma appeared likely to bring greater profit to the Japanese than would control of Australia and the present signs were that Japan intended to continue major operations in Burma. Japan must realise that the risk of war with Russia existed and, after an assessment of Japanese strength, the Chiefs of Staff Committee thought it improbable that, in addition to operations in Burma and India, Japan could undertake simultaneous operations against Russia and Australia. Japan could probably accomplish her main object, the consolidation of the co-prosperity sphere in Asia, more easily and cheaply by placing herself astride the eastern and western reinforcement routes to Australia than by attempting to control the whole of the continent. It would probably suffice for Japan's purpose if she occupied Samoa, Fiji and New Caledonia off the east coast and occupied Fremantle on the west coast. At any rate it would only be after Japan had thus consolidated her position in the southern Pacific and when the situation in regard to Russia had become clear that Japan would decide whether invasion of Australia was either practicable or necessary. On the "general defence" of Australia the Chiefs of Staff Committee said:

> As Australia and New Zealand have been included in the American zone of responsibility, defence is now a matter to be concerted between Australian and American service authorities; our comments must be judged accordingly.
>
> A movement of the United States main fleet into eastern Australian waters provides at present the only sure means of protecting eastern Australia and New Zealand, but the United States fleet cannot undertake to remain in Australian waters indefinitely. The Allied aim should therefore be to build up the land, air and local naval forces in Australia and New Zealand to a point where they can stand without the immediate support of the United States fleet, and can ensure that they will not be defeated before the United States fleet is able to return to sever the enemy's communications with her invading forces.
>
> Whilst it would obviously be wrong to take any avoidable risk in the defence of Australia the utmost care is necessary in relating the defences to the likelihood and scale of attack.
>
> There is a danger that by over-insurance in Australia we may prejudice the building up of adequate forces in the Middle East and India. We also have to consider Russia who is likely sooner or later to come into conflict with Japan.

The Chiefs of Staff Committee, after agreeing generally with the Australian view of the scale of attack likely to be made on Port Moresby and Darwin, concluded that the defence of Darwin must depend on "light naval and air striking forces with adequate fighter cover" and that the defence of Port Moresby must similarly depend on "local land and air garrisons and such air assistance as can be given from the Australian mainland". They estimated that the initial scale of attack on eastern Australia

—if, contrary to their views, it did take place—would not exceed a total of four divisions and would be directed at not more than two points simultaneously. The restriction would be mainly in the size of the convoys Japan could escort. Subsequent attacks would depend on the degree of success obtained in the initial assault and the total force which Japan could transport and subsequently maintain might amount to eleven divisions.

Regarding Western Australia they wrote:

> The capture of Fremantle would deprive us of a base on the south-eastern seaboard of the Indian Ocean. Neither we nor the United States can afford to detach important naval units for the local defence of Western Australia and the sea approaches to the area would therefore be safer for the Japanese than those to any objective on the east coast. Moreover, the area itself is so remote that it would be difficult to dislodge the Japanese once established ashore. For these reasons we consider the defence of Fremantle just as urgent a commitment as the defence of eastern Australia, although the area itself is intrinsically less important. In the absence of major naval forces the defence must depend chiefly on land and air forces. We estimate that the scale of attack might be two to three divisions.

By the time that this report reached the Advisory War Council in mid-April, discussions which had been proceeding on parallel lines regarding the new commands in the Pacific and the designation of a Supreme Commander had reached such a point that any narrowly-conceived discussion of the defence of the Australian continent had ceased to have much application to the waging of the war. The analysis that has been given above is of less interest for any effective action which followed than as an exposition of Australian attitudes and the situation of Australia in February and March 1942.

Similarly of interest because they reveal attitudes rather than because of any immediate effect on the course of the war were an appreciation of the military situation in the Far East made by the military advisers of the United Kingdom early in March 1942, and the comments on it by the Australian Chiefs of Staff. In this exchange of views the tendency of the Australians to undervalue the Indian Ocean and the west coast of Australia again appears.

To the British advisers the breach of the Malay Barrier by Japan would mean a clear run into the Indian Ocean, where Britain was dangerously weak in all respects. To the east, the points immediately in danger were Fiji and New Caledonia, stepping-stones to Australia and New Zealand. Australia would be one of the main bases from which the offensive against Japan would eventually be launched and for this purpose they regarded both the east and the south-west of the continent as specially important but did not think that Darwin was "strategically essential" if the Malay Barrier were lost. Australia was insecure at present but as Britain did not have the forces available, the United States would have to be largely responsible for reinforcing Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and New Caledonia. Britain herself would need to send considerable reinforcements to Ceylon, India, Burma and the Indian Ocean, even at the expense of the

Middle East. In brief, Britain's policy in the near future must be to provide for the safety of Britain's sea communications by building up the Eastern Fleet and by safeguarding bases necessarily required for use; to withhold major reinforcements from Java, but to defend the island with available forces with the utmost resolution; to provide reinforcements as quickly as possible to safeguard essential points vital to the continuance of the struggle against Japan, namely Ceylon, Australia, India and, if possible, Burma; to accept risks in the Middle East to stabilise the Far East; to exploit shipping resources to the utmost and if necessary incur a temporary reduction in Britain's import programme in the interests of strategy. The United States should undertake offensive operations against the Japanese sea communications; the protection of essential air and naval bases in the air reinforcement route across the Pacific; the concentration of air and land forces in Australia; the building up of a strong Pacific fleet; and the reinforcement of the garrisons of Fiji and New Caledonia and the improvement of New Zealand's defences in view of the possible loss of Fiji and New Caledonia and her importance as a channel of communication to the United States and as a base for future action.

When this appreciation, which was received by the Australian Government on 10th March, was referred to the Advisory War Council on the 11th, the Australian Chiefs of Staff were asked to prepare their own appreciation "as a rejoinder".[6] This "rejoinder" took the form largely of assertions, with various examples, that the United Kingdom's military advisers were placing too much emphasis on stabilising the present position rather than taking the initiative from the Japanese. "Our policy should be not merely to strengthen the positions that we now hold with a view to retaining them, but to attack the enemy with a view to causing him to withdraw from positions that he has gained and which afford him opportunities for further advance." Rabaul and Darwin should be either recaptured or retained in order to strike at the enemy. They disagreed, too, with the naval policy that built up a British fleet in the Indian Ocean and an American fleet in the Pacific. There should be an Allied force of British and American naval units of sufficient strength to challenge the Japanese fleet at any moment. The paper said that the time and place for effecting a concentration would depend on circumstances but references in the appreciation to possible objectives and the control of the operation, perhaps from Pearl Harbour, make it clear that only a concentration in the Pacific was in mind. "It is realised," the paper concluded, "that the withdrawal of part of our forces from the Indian Ocean will weaken the protection of Ceylon and important sea communications for a time. The protection of the west and south-west of Australia would also be weakened. This, however, could be accepted for the ultimate advantage gained by aggressive action against Japan itself, which would, it is anticipated, draw off the Japanese forces that are now available for further

[6] Advisory War Council Minute 826, on War Cabinet Agendum 146/1942, 11 Mar 1942.

attacks." This appreciation was forwarded, with the endorsement of the Government and Advisory War Council, to London.[7]

In further comments, dated 6th April, the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff pointed again to the fact which they had set out in their first paper and on which the Australian Chiefs of Staff had not commented, that there was no naval base available from which a single combined fleet could cover both the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. This fact made necessary the division of the naval forces into two separate fleets. For the protection of communications to India, Persian oil and the Middle East a fleet must be based in Ceylon, while for the protection of American communications to Australia and New Zealand and for operations against the Japanese, a Pacific Fleet must be based between eastern Australia and Hawaii. They agreed that to assume the offensive against Japan it would be necessary to concentrate superior naval forces in the Pacific and possibly to do so at the expense of the Indian Ocean, but the moment for doing this would not arise until a certain minimum defensive strength in naval, land and air forces had been built up in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, until the combined Pacific Fleet would have decisive superiority over the Japanese and until the land and air forces, equipment and shipping in the Pacific theatre were sufficient to secure the territory that had been seized with the help of a superior fleet. For the time being the Allies must remain strategically on the defensive in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans and while waiting to build up their strength undertake offensive action in the form of raids which would tie down enemy air forces, impede consolidation and compel him to expend his resources. These further comments were simply "noted" by the Australian Government.[8]

When the Advisory War Council discussed the Australian Chiefs of Staff appreciation of 5th March, the Prime Minister also mentioned to them questions which he had raised with the Minister for the Army as early as 11th December relating to the return of General Blamey from the Middle East, the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief of the Army and a review of the personnel at present holding high commands and staff appointments. The council agreed in principle to the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Army and endorsed the selection of Blamey for the post.[9] In view of the gravity of the Japanese threat to Australia and as the date of the return to Australia of Blamey was uncertain, it was decided a week later to appoint Lieut-General Lavarack as acting Commander-in-Chief to take up the appointment forthwith.[1]

The A.I.F. divisions from the Middle East began to arrive in Australia in the first half of March and by the end of the month the 7th Division was concentrated in South Australia. One brigade of the 6th was also in that State, the other two brigades being temporarily held back for the defence of Colombo. In the meantime further American forces had arrived,

[7] Advisory War Council Minute 845 and War Cabinet Minute 2024, 18 Mar 1942.
[8] Advisory War Council Minute 904, 16 Apr 1942.
[9] Advisory War Council Minute 812, 5 Mar 1942.
[1] Advisory War Council Minute 831 and War Cabinet Minute 1989, 11 Mar 1942.

including both ground and air forces. On 2nd February, 6,859 United States Army personnel, mostly Air Corps, disembarked at Melbourne; on 12th February, 2,840 Air Force personnel sailed for the Netherlands East Indies; detachments left Melbourne on 8th and 11th February for Wyndham, Broome, Oodnadatta, Alice Springs and Drysdale River, the move to be completed about 18th February. On the 12th 500 men of an engineering unit left Melbourne for Batchelor, near Darwin, due to arrive there on the 20th.[2] Before the end of the month another 6,645 Air Corps men and attached service troops arrived in Brisbane and 20,414 infantry, artillery, engineers and attached service troops arrived in Melbourne on the way to New Caledonia.[3] On 14th March, allowing for departures, over 20,000 American troops remained in Australia. On 31st March there were 33,500 concentrated chiefly in Melbourne and Brisbane but with nearly 5,000 at Townsville and a like number at Darwin. Including A.I.F., A.M.F. and Americans there were about 400,000 men under arms, although only half of these would be in operational units.

Since 20th February Australian troops had been engaged against the Japanese in Timor. As mentioned earlier, some 1,600 Australian troops had been sent to Dutch Timor from Darwin on 12th December. That day the Portuguese Government agreed to a proposal made by the British Government, with Australian and Dutch approval, that the Governor of Portuguese Timor should acquiesce in the arrival of Australian and Dutch forces in Portuguese Timor if it was attacked.

The colony of Portuguese Timor, consisting mainly of the eastern half of Timor Island, only 400 miles from Darwin, had a population of 450,000 including only about 300 Europeans and being half a world away from a metropolitan state of limited economic and military resources was itself backward in development and practically undefended. Defensively it was the weakest point in the Indonesian chain and the point nearest to the Australian mainland. There had been signs of increasing Japanese interest in the colony for some years.

The diplomatic weakness of the Portuguese arose both from the position of Portugal as a small Continental European state conscious of the dominating power of Nazi Germany on the Continent and from the fact that the most important of its Asiatic colonies, Macao, was under immediate threat from the Japanese army in South China. The Portuguese Government, under Dr Salazar, though holding to the current alliance with Great Britain, was susceptible to Axis pressure both in Europe and Asia. They had no love for the Japanese but were not strong enough to risk offence.

On 16th December the British Government informed the Portuguese Government that a Japanese attack on Timor seemed imminent and it had arranged with the Australian Government that Dutch and Australian officers should see the Governor of Portuguese Timor and, in

[2] War Cabinet Agendum 85/1942, 7 Feb; 92/1942, 14 Feb.
[3] War Cabinet Agendum 123/1942, 28 Feb.

anticipation of an invitation to lend help, some 350 Dutch and Australian troops would arrive two hours after the interview.[4]

On the 17th the Australian Lieut-Colonel Leggatt[5] and the Dutch Lieut-Colonel Detiger, both in civilian clothes, arrived at Dili, the capital of the Portuguese colony, and were introduced to the Governor by Mr David Ross, the Australian Consul there. The Governor said that his instructions were to ask for help only after being attacked. He was told that troops were on their way. (Netherlands Indies troops numbering 260 and 155 Australians had embarked for Dili in a Dutch warship on the 16th.) Meanwhile in Lisbon

> Dr Salazar's reaction was sharp and violent. He refused to allow the Governor to agree to assistance except in the event of an attack. He argued that an earlier admission of Allied troops would mean the abandonment of Portuguese neutrality, and would be followed by the Japanese seizure of Macao.[6]

At Dili at 9.45 a.m. on the 17th the Governor told the Australian and Dutch envoys that he had received a message from Lisbon and wanted an hour to decode it. This was agreed to. The Dutch warship carrying the troops had already arrived. At 10.50 the Governor said that the message instructed him not to allow troops to land unless Portuguese Timor was attacked, and therefore his forces must resist. Leggatt and Detiger replied that they hoped there would be no fighting and pointed out that the defending force was too small to succeed. The Governor said that he would see the commander of his troops and, in the words of Leggatt's report, "ascertain what arrangements could be made". That afternoon the troops landed unopposed. The inhabitants seemed friendly.

The British Government, anxious to avoid a break with Portugal, proposed that the Allied forces should be withdrawn on the arrival of Portuguese reinforcements and this was agreed to.

On 31st December the Australian Advisory War Council was informed of a proposal to replace Dutch forces in Portuguese Timor with an equivalent number of Australian troops from those already in Dutch Timor. They were also informed of Japanese pressure on Portugal to secure withdrawal of Allied forces, under threat of Japanese action, and advised of the proposal that Australian and Dutch forces be withdrawn from Portuguese Timor on the arrival of 700 Portuguese troops.[7]

The Australian Chiefs of Staff, however, in a report dated 4th January, expressed the view that 700 Portuguese would not constitute an adequate protection. It was decided to place this view before the British Government.

By 22nd December the Australian force around Dili had been increased until it comprised a complete Independent Company. Soon it was learnt that the Portuguese reinforcements were not expected before the second

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[4] L. Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (1962), p. 376, a volume in the official series, *History of the Second World War*.

[5] Lt-Col Hon Sir William Leggatt, DSO, MC, ED. (1st AIF: Lt 60 Bn.) 2/22 Bn; CO 2/40 Bn 1941-42. MLA, Vic 1947-56. Barrister; of Mornington, Vic; b. Malekula Is, New Hebrides, 23 Dec 1894.

[6] Woodward, p. 376.

[7] Advisory War Council Minute 639, 31 Dec 1941.

week in March. On 20th February, however, Japanese forces landed in Dutch and Portuguese Timor.[8] By the 23rd the main Allied force in Dutch Timor had been overcome but the Independent Company fought on in the mountains where it was joined by a considerable number of men from Dutch Timor.

After the Japanese landing at Dili Ross was confined to his house until, in March, he was sent into the mountains bearing a request from the Japanese to the Australian commander that the Australians should surrender. Ross gave the Australian officers useful information about the Japanese at Dili and took back with him the Australians' refusal to surrender. In June Ross reached the Australian positions with a second Japanese request to surrender.

Mr Ross had not been given instructions to return to Dili, and he had made it clear to the Japanese before he left that he would communicate the Australian Commander's decision within 10 days. The Australian Commander's refusal to surrender had been communicated to the Japanese Commander in accordance with his promise, and Mr Ross subsequently left the island in a patrol launch which had come from Darwin.[9]

On 16th July Ross described the situation in Timor to the Advisory War Council at Canberra. There were then some 1,500 Japanese troops in Dili, he said. In the hills were 460 Australians and 260 Dutch troops, mainly natives. The morale of the Australians was excellent. In three months they had killed 250 Japanese and had only one man wounded. The position was a stalemate. "The Australian and Dutch troops cannot defeat the Japanese, and the Japanese have not sufficient strength in Portuguese Timor to round up the Allied troops."[1]

4—THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC COMMAND

As the course of the war moved southward and the A.B.D.A. Command disappeared, the discussions of December 1941 regarding unified inter-Allied commands were revived. In the new circumstances, Australia, seeing her role as that of a vital base in the war against Japan, also saw Australia as the headquarters of a new command. The presence of American forces in Australia, the promise of American reinforcements and the hope of attracting stronger Allied naval, land and air forces into the region stimulated thinking along these lines and helped to give it direction. Again, however, it was not Australian proposals but Washington decisions that determined the outcome.

A suggestion for a Supreme Commander over an extended Anzac Area had been contained in the appreciation on future policy and strategy in the Pacific which had been prepared by the Australian and New Zealand

[8] The Portuguese troops had left Lourenco Marques in a slow troopship on 28th January and were still on passage. They returned to East Africa.

[9] Advisory War Council Minute 1003, 16 Jul 1942.

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 1003, 16 Jul 1942. A second Independent Company was landed on Timor in September and the original company withdrawn in December. The Japanese forces were increased and they gained a growing ascendancy over a proportion of the natives. In January and February 1943 the last of the Australians were withdrawn. In the course of the year some hundreds of Dutch, Portuguese and Indonesians were also taken to Australia.

Chiefs of Staff on 26th February. They drew attention to the fact that the A.B.D.A. Command, with Wavell as Supreme Commander, had already been dispersed and the A.B.D.A. Area would soon cease to exist. This left three Allied naval commands bordering on Australia (Eastern Fleet, Abdafloat and Anzac) and there must be some difficulty in ensuring the cooperation of the Allied army and air forces in Australia with these commands. For the time being any coordinated activity between Allied army and air forces in Australia, New Zealand and their neighbouring islands depended upon day-to-day cooperation. To put an end to this state of affairs the Chiefs of Staff recommended that the Anzac Area should be extended and there should be unified control of all land, sea and air forces within the newly-defined area, subject only to the general direction of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee in Washington. Under the Supreme Commander there should be a naval commander of all the naval forces allotted to the area and an army and an air commander for (*a*) Australia, its territories and New Caledonia and (*b*) New Zealand, Fiji and other islands in the vicinity. These navy, army and air force commanders would not be subject to the Government of the country in which they were located but to the Supreme Commander of the Anzac Area.

After discussion with the Advisory War Council this appreciation was revised in a way that reopened, too, the general question of the higher direction of the war in the Pacific with which the Australian Government had already shown deep concern. The revised version of the Chiefs of Staff appreciation suggested that, "in order to establish the closest liaison between the Supreme Chiefs of Staff in Washington and to obtain fulfilment of the requirements of forces and equipment for the Anzac Area", the Supreme Commander should be directly represented on the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee by selected officers from the Anzac Area nominated by him. The policy of the Governments concerned, the paper continued, would be most effectively represented by their respective Ministers at Washington in coordination and cooperation with the representatives of the Supreme Commander upon the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee. The system was also intended to leave a wide measure of responsibility to local commanders over the details of actual operations under authority delegated to them by the Supreme Commander.

The new Anzac Area was intended to include, in addition to the existing Anzac Area, the whole of Australia and its territories, New Zealand, an area to the west and north-west of Australia including Timor, Ambon, the whole of New Guinea, the sea about 500 miles beyond the west coast of Australia and the sea to the south of Australia. This was considered to be "a workable area and one that would accord with strategic and administrative requirements both for defensive and offensive warfare against the enemy". The extension would involve considerably increased naval responsibility and, to meet this, it would be necessary to provide additional naval forces.

At the request of the Advisory War Council the Australian and New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, in collaboration with General Brett, also prepared a draft for a directive to the Supreme Commander.

The basic strategic concept for the conduct of the war in the Anzac Area (the draft directive said) lies in an immediate change on the part of the Allies to a positive offensive strategy, and plans must be formulated to provide for the security of Australia, New Zealand and the advanced territories, and to ensure freedom of action for offensive operations on the part of the Allied nations against Japan. The piecemeal employment of forces should be minimised. Your operations should be so conducted as to further preparations for the offensive.

The general strategic policy should be related from the outset to future major offensive operations and with this in view should be directed to securing Australia and New Zealand, not only to maintain their integrity, but also to form bases for offensive action on the part of the United Nations to defeat Japan. The immediate problems that confront you are:

(1) To secure the lines of communication from the United States to Australia and New Zealand by holding New Caledonia and Fiji.

(2) To prevent the further southward movement of the enemy into Australia, either from New Britain via New Guinea, or from Timor through Darwin, or down the west coast.

(3) To maintain essential communications within the area. When these have been secured, it will be possible to plan offensive operations in the light of the situation then prevailing including that in the western Pacific. In the event of failure to hold New Caledonia and Fiji it will be a primary necessity to ensure the integrity of the North Island of New Zealand.

There was a full discussion of the appreciation and draft directive prepared by the Chiefs of Staff at a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 28th February, at which the two New Zealand Ministers, Sullivan and Coates, were again present. The council—and in particular a drafting committee composed of Curtin, Evatt and Menzies (for Australia) and Sullivan and Coates (for New Zealand)—elaborated the proposals for the machinery for higher direction into a plan for a new inter-Allied Council to be established in Washington. After further discussion by the Australian and New Zealand Chiefs of Staff, in collaboration with General Brett, and reference to the Government of New Zealand, a cablegram embodying their proposals and a summary of the joint appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff was dispatched to London on 5th March.[2] Previously an interim request had been made that northern Australia should revert from the A.B.D.A. Command to Australian command.[3]

In effect, Australia and New Zealand were renewing the claim for participation in the higher direction of that phase of the war in which they were most directly concerned—a claim which had not been satisfied by the establishment of the Pacific War Council in London. After expressing the view that the organisation, machinery and procedure adopted for the A.B.D.A. Area and Supreme Command had been unsatisfactory in practice, the Advisory War Council proposed that a council should be established in Washington comprising accredited representatives of the Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom,

[2] Telegram to Dominions Office, 5 Mar, repeated to New Zealand.
[3] Telegram to Page, 3 Mar; and from Page, 3 Mar 1942.

Australia and New Zealand and having President Roosevelt or his deputy as chairman. The membership might be increased by decision of the council itself in the light of events and experience. For example, if Canada were to send forces to the Anzac Area she could become a member. The council would be responsible for the higher policy of the war in the Anzac Area and would deal with questions of policy and the provision of forces and supplies. It was not intended to replace the Pacific Council in London and the future relationship between the two bodies and the demarcation of their functions could be determined later in the light of changes in the strategical position. The "general strategical control" of the Anzac Area would be vested in the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee at Washington, but to this committee should be added for the purpose one naval, one army and one air force officer from each of the Dominions to be appointed by the Governments of Australia and New Zealand after consultation with the Supreme Commander. The Supreme Commander would be appointed by the council or by the governments concerned. He would be subject to "the general strategic direction" of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee in Washington as specially constituted for the Anzac Area by the addition of the Australian and New Zealand nominees. The establishment of this council was "considered essential from the governmental aspect to provide for an effective voice by the Australian and New Zealand Governments in the higher policy of the war in the Anzac Area, in view of their responsibilities to the people and Parliaments of those Dominions for local defence and the fact that the whole of their forces are being placed under the operational control of the Supreme Commander". It was also urged that the council would provide a direct and expeditious means of prosecuting a vigorous war policy in the Anzac Area and would give that centralised supervision which was so essential to the conduct of war by allies.[4]

The views were communicated by the Australian Government in the following form: "After an exchange of views with the New Zealand Government the following conclusions have been unanimously reached by the Australian Advisory War Council." The New Zealand Government informed Churchill of their agreement and stressed the urgency and importance of taking action.[5]

In giving its final approval to the dispatch of this communication to the United Kingdom Government the Advisory War Council emphasised the necessity for the immediate appointment of the Supreme Commander and agreed that the Australian Government should indicate that it would welcome the appointment of General Brett. This was done in a paragraph of the cablegram to London, which also referred to Brett's experience as Deputy Commander of the A.B.D.A. Area, the knowledge he had gained of Australian and New Zealand requirements, and his relationships with the Government and services.

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 801 and War Cabinet Minute 1930, 28 Feb 1942; Advisory War Council Minute 802, 4 Mar; telegram to Dominions Office, 5 Mar, repeated to the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

[5] Telegram from New Zealand to Dominions Office, repeated to Australia, 6 Mar 1942.

Churchill, who had been asked to consider the proposal and then forward it with his recommendation to Roosevelt, was reported to be sympathetic but to have dispatched the plan to Washington without comments in order to save delay.[6] In a personal telegram Churchill also let Curtin know of advice he had received from Washington of the way in which the personality of Admiral King, and the relations between the United States Army and Navy, would have to be taken into account so that the attempts to obtain unity of command in the Anzac Area did not jeopardise unity of naval command in the Pacific as a whole.[7]

Independently of the Australian and New Zealand discussion of the problem, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had also been preparing proposals for new commands to place before the Pacific War Council in London. They drew a boundary between the "Indian Ocean theatre" and the "Pacific theatre" to run along the western coast of Australia. The Australian Chiefs of Staff, however, after considering the proposals, urged that the whole of Australia, including the sea areas within operational distance of Australia by air should be in one theatre so as to ensure the most effective functioning of the land, sea and air forces based upon Australia.[8]

At the same time as Australia was making proposals regarding unified commands and the higher direction of the war, Curtin was also renewing to Churchill the Australian claim for increased supplies of war equipment, particularly aircraft.[9] In the British War Cabinet, Page was urging the importance of the rapid reinforcement of Australia and the giving of priority in supplies because Australia was "a vital base for the offensive against Japan". He was informed, and at once reported to Curtin, that, in discussions with Churchill, Roosevelt had recognised the importance of the defence of Australia but also insisted on the intimate connection between the Australian theatre and the Middle East and Indian theatres. The Middle East and India might be the only doors through which aid could reach Russia and China and so assist the final victory. Accordingly Roosevelt would send not only the 41st American Division to Australia immediately but one further division to Australia and one further division to New Zealand if the 9th Australian Division and the New Zealand Division could be left in the Middle East.[1] These questions of reinforcement and the return of the 9th Division of the A.I.F. are further discussed below, but it is clear that, from the beginning of the discussions on unified commands in Australia and the Pacific and the strategic role of Australia, the Australian Government was made aware of Roosevelt's view that what was done for Australia and what aid was given to Australia would be considered side by side with and not in priority to the claims of adjacent theatres.

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[6] Telegram from Page, 6 Mar 1942.
[7] Telegram from Dominions Office, 6 Mar 1942.
[8] Telegram from Page, 7 Mar, and to Page, 9 Mar 1942.
[9] Telegram to Dominions Office, 7 Mar, and from Dominions Office, 14 Mar 1942.
[1] Telegram from Page, 9 Mar, and from Dominions Office, 10 Mar 1942.

On 13th March Curtin learnt from Page that Churchill had received from Roosevelt new proposals for the general conduct of the whole world war and that, in the absence of any other reply to the Australian suggestions, this would appear to include the American view on the extension of the Anzac Area. Recognising that the arrangements made in January for the whole of the South-West Pacific had largely become obsolescent the President proposed that the United States should assume operational responsibility for the Pacific theatre. Decisions on military operations, whether by army, navy or air, for the areas within this theatre would be made by the American Chiefs of Staff in Washington. The Supreme Commander in the Pacific area would be an American, and local commands in Australia and New Zealand would be under an Australian and a New Zealander respectively and the local command in China under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. If later an offensive developed in the Netherlands East Indies the local command in that area would be given to a Dutchman. Immediate military and operational decisions would be made by the American Supreme Commander for the whole Pacific, under the supervision of the United States Chiefs of Staff in Washington. Methods of regaining the offensive would be decided in the same way. There would be set up in Washington an advisory body on operational matters consisting of representatives from Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands East Indies and China, under the chairmanship of an American. The President suggested that this body could take over the operational and supply functions of the existing Pacific War Council established in London but considered that the political functions should remain with the council in London. The United Kingdom would be relieved of any tasks in the Pacific other than to supplement American efforts by the supply of war material where possible.

Parallel to the creation of this Pacific area, there should also be created a middle area stretching from Singapore to the Mediterranean which would be a United Kingdom responsibility, it being understood, however, that Australia and New Zealand would give as much assistance to this area as their Governments could manage and that the Americans would allocate to it all possible munitions and merchant ships.

A third main area would cover the Atlantic and plans for the establishment of a new front on the European Continent and would be the joint responsibility of the United States and the United Kingdom.

The "grand strategy" of all three areas would remain the concern of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington and London and the joint committees on shipping, raw materials and munitions would continue to operate. The whole would be subject to the joint approval of Roosevelt and Churchill.[2]

On the 17th, in the absence of any comment from Australia or New Zealand, Churchill expressed to Roosevelt his general concurrence in the proposals, subject to observations on certain issues which he regarded as

[2] Telegrams from Page, 12 Mar, and the documents on which they were based.

"fundamental" and immediately repeated the text of his message to Curtin, who received it on the night of the 18th.

Among these fundamental issues were that nothing must prevent the United States and British Navies from working to a common strategy from Alaska to Capetown, operating with a single purpose, an exact timing, and upon closely coordinated plans. Considering existing naval strengths, naval problems must be viewed as a whole and this could only be done by the machinery of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee, acting directly under Roosevelt and Churchill and in constant contact and agreement. All other arrangements for separate commands in the Pacific and Indian spheres must be effectively subordinated to this particular form of supreme command. He suggested that attachment of Australian, New Zealand, Dutch and Chinese staff officers to the proposed Pacific Council in Washington to assist the American staffs on operational matters was necessary. Regarding the two Pacific Councils in London and Washington, which, incidentally, he referred to as "advisory bodies which will have to be consulted on the larger issues", he thought that the one in Washington would have "more practical and effective influence on events than the one in London", which would, however, "discuss the whole state of the war against Japan" and send its opinions from time to time to the council in Washington. Similarly the council in Washington would send its opinions to the council in London, as the executive responsibility for the conduct of operations in the Indian theatre would still remain in the British War Cabinet. It followed that the United Kingdom should have a representative on the council in Washington and the United States should in future have a representative on the council in London. The dividing line between the Pacific and the Indian theatres should not be so rigid as to hamper planning and manoeuvres.[3]

In an accompanying telegram Churchill assured Curtin once again that, although the Pacific would be under an American commander, Britain would still regard it her duty to come to the aid of Australia to the best of her ability; and if Australia were invaded in force—"which has by no means come to pass and may never come to pass"—Britain would do her utmost to divert British troops and British ships rounding the Cape or already in the Indian Ocean to the succour of Australia albeit at the expense of India and the Middle East.[4]

These messages from Churchill had not been received at the time when the Advisory War Council met on 18th March[5] to consider the Australian attitude to the new plan, but Curtin had received a message from Roosevelt through General Brett, on the 17th, to the effect that the President was in agreement with the Australian proposals regarding organisation and command of the Australian area except as to some details concerning relationships to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and to boundaries.[6]

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[3] Telegram from Dominions Office, 17 Mar 1942.

[4] Telegram from the Dominions Office, 17 Mar 1942.

[5] On this day, as mentioned below, the nomination of General MacArthur as Supreme Commander in the SWPA was announced.

[6] Reported in Advisory War Council Minute 844, 18 Mar 1942.

On 18th March the Advisory War Council, in the light of comments received from Page and from Bruce, and a report by the Australian Chiefs of Staff, made recommendations on the views to be expressed by Page at the meeting of the Pacific War Council in London, to which Churchill had referred Roosevelt's plan, and proposed that these views be also put to Roosevelt by Evatt, who was shortly to arrive in Washington.[7] These recommendations were taken as the decisions of the War Cabinet later in the day,[8] but, after the meeting, Curtin, having received the additional information contained in telegrams from Bruce and from Churchill, modified the decisions in the light of that information and this action was confirmed by the Advisory War Council on 24th March.[9]

The Australian views, communicated by Curtin to Page, to Evatt, and to the United Kingdom Government on 19th March were to the following effect: The proposed division of the world into three theatres was accepted subject to an understanding that the whole of Australia and adjacent seas were in the Pacific theatre. It was also suggested that on tactical and strategical grounds China should be in the Indian area rather than the Pacific because the only lines of communication were likely to be through that area, and the bases for aircraft operating in China must be sited in that area and any attacks against the Japanese in or from China must be combined with forces located in the Indian area. Australia agreed that the Pacific Council in London should continue to function with the addition of a United States representative. Regarding the Pacific Council in Washington Australia said, as she had said before, that it was "imperative" that Australia should have a voice in the higher direction of the war in the Pacific theatre, particularly as the whole of the Australian forces were now to be placed under the operational control of a supreme commander. Australia would not be content with an advisory body on operational matters in Washington. Australia agreed that the United States should assume operational responsibility for the Pacific area and wanted to establish in Washington a service staff to act as technical advisers to the Australian representative on the Pacific War Council and to be associated with the American Chiefs of Staff "for the purpose of Anzac strategy". Instead of the local command in Australia being placed under an Australian, as proposed by the President, they held to their own original proposal that an army and an air commander be appointed for Australia, its territories and New Caledonia.[1]

In due course Page reported that the Pacific War Council in London had agreed that the proposal to set up a Pacific War Council in Washington, with a British representative on it, and to add an American representative

[7] Advisory War Council Minute 844, 18 Mar 1942.
In March Dr Evatt left on a special mission to the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Previously the Advisory War Council had recorded a "consensus of opinion" that "an Australian Minister" should proceed to Washington immediately and then to London. In Washington he would represent the Commonwealth Government on the "Anzac Council" if it were established, and in London he would be the accredited Australian representative in the United Kingdom War Cabinet and on the Pacific Council, replacing Sir Earle Page. The duration of his stay abroad was not fixed and he was in fact absent from 14th March until 22nd June.

[8] War Cabinet Minute 2023, 18 Mar 1942.

[9] Advisory War Council Minute 853, 24 Mar 1942.

[1] Telegrams to Page, repeated to Evatt; and to Dominions Office, 19 Mar 1942.

to the Pacific War Council in London was the most practicable way of meeting the varying views of the nations concerned. At the same time it was recognised that vital matters might have to be referred back to the various Governments. It was also agreed that in the Pacific theatre the operational responsibility should be assumed by Washington. The British Chiefs of Staff had endorsed the Australian suggestion that the dividing line between the Pacific should be drawn at 110 degrees of longitude East and would finalise the matter with the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington.[2]

On 17th March Curtin had been informed by Roosevelt, through Brett, that General Douglas MacArthur had arrived in Australia from the Philippines on that day and had assumed command of all United States Forces in Australia. The President also stated that he was in general agreement with the proposals submitted by the Australian and New Zealand Governments regarding the organisation and command of the Anzac Area, except as to some details concerning relationship to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and as to boundaries. These exceptions, however, would be adjusted with the interested Governments as quickly as possible. The President further intimated that, should it be in accord with the wishes of the Government and people of Australia, it would be highly acceptable to him and pleasing to the American people for the Australian Government to nominate General MacArthur as the Supreme Commander of all Allied Forces in the South-West Pacific.

The Australian War Cabinet at once agreed to the suggestion and on the same day the nomination was submitted simultaneously to London and Washington in a cablegram which, after voicing admiration of MacArthur's defence of the Philippines, declared that his leadership of the Allied forces in the new area would be an inspiration to the Australian people and all the forces who would be privileged to serve under his command. The Advisory War Council was informed of the action taken.[3] An announcement was made by the Prime Minister on the 18th, and on the same day he made public, what a great number of people had joyfully seen with their own eyes, that "there are very substantial American forces in Australia".[4]

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[2] Telegram from Page, 25 Mar 1942.

[3] War Cabinet Minute 2021, 17 Mar; Advisory War Council Minute 837, 18 Mar 1942.

[4] There is nothing in the Australian records to vary the account given in S. Milner, *Victory in Papua* (1957), pp. 17-18, a volume in the official series *United States Army in World War II*, regarding the circumstances of MacArthur's coming to Australia by air from Mindanao, under orders from Washington and without prior consultation with Curtin. Milner writes: "General Brett, who had been ordered to keep MacArthur's coming a matter 'of profound secrecy' until the actual moment of his arrival, at once called Mr Curtin by telephone and told him the news. Then, in accordance with prior instructions from the President and speaking in the President's name, he proposed that the Australian Government nominate General MacArthur as the Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area. [The message which had been prepared in advance was read over the telephone to Mr Curtin at 4.15 that day and a confirmation sent by mail later the same day.] . . . Mr Curtin, who had had no prior intimation that General MacArthur was coming, was (as the President reported to Mr Churchill) extremely 'enthusiastic' at this turn of events, and at once nominated General MacArthur as his government's choice for Supreme Commander. A joint press release was issued . . . at Melbourne and Washington, announcing that General MacArthur had arrived in Australia and would be Supreme Commander of the forces there and in the Philippines. To forestall Axis propaganda which might make capital of General MacArthur's departure from the Philippines, the release at Washington contained the additional statement (later cleared with the Australians) that his arrival had been 'in accordance with the request of the Australian Government'."

Previously, pending the conclusion of arrangements for a Supreme Commander of Allied forces in the new Anzac Area, Australia had taken up as a matter of urgency the unified control of all air operations in Australia. After discussion in the Advisory War Council Curtin expressed to Roosevelt the view that machinery for unified control and joint planning should be established immediately in order to ensure that the best possible use was made of all available aircraft in Australia "in view of the imminence of the Japanese threat". Australia was willing to place its air force under the control of General Brett at once for the purpose of achieving these objectives. The reference of the matter to Roosevelt was necessary because Brett had considered himself unable to act with the Australian Chiefs of Staff in this matter without authority from Washington.[5] On the 18th Brett's appointment to the Allied Air Command was announced at the same time as MacArthur's appointment as Supreme Commander.

A week after the announcement of the appointment of MacArthur and the division of the world into three main war theatres, the Australian Government learnt from Washington that the Pacific theatre would be divided into a South-West Pacific Area under MacArthur and a South Pacific Area directly under Admiral King at Washington and that the boundary between these two areas, running down the 160th parallel, would place New Zealand, Fiji and New Caledonia in the Pacific Area, which was largely a naval area, and Australia in the South-West Pacific Area.[6]

Both Australia and New Zealand were strongly opposed to this division. To the Chiefs of Staff, for whom the Tasman Sea had always been the core of strategy, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and New Caledonia were interdependent and unity of command over them was necessary for the most effective and economic use of their forces to reinforce each other. The Australian Chiefs of Staff, in conformity with their views on the need for a concentrated naval force capable of taking offensive action against Japan, also expressed a preference for placing all the naval forces in the Pacific directly under the command of the United States Chiefs of Staff, now that the earlier plan for an Anzac Area would not be achieved.[7]

The Australian Government was, however, reassured by reports from Evatt that the Australian view of an offensive naval strategy was likely to accord with the ideas of Admiral King, that the division into two areas would not restrict the major naval forces of the United States from coming into the South-West Pacific and that the "thorny question of relative jurisdiction of commanders" would gradually solve itself. There was confidence, too, that the Pacific Council at Washington would give Australia an opportunity to help in the solution of the question. Moreover there was the plain fact that nothing Australia said was likely to alter the boundaries of the areas of command.[8] Therefore, as the matter had to

[5] Advisory War Council Minute 821, and War Cabinet Minute 1988, 11 Mar 1942.
[6] Telegram from Evatt, 25 Mar 1942.
[7] Telegram to Evatt, 29 Mar 1942.
[8] Telegrams from Evatt, 30 Mar and 1 Apr 1942.

be decided without further delay, Australia agreed to the division between the two areas.[9]

Another point arose from Australian insistence that no Australian troops could be moved out of Australian territory without the consent of the Australian Government and that there should be a right of appeal by the local commander to his own government and freedom of communication between a local commander and his government.[1] This too was settled without difficulty and the directives for the Pacific Ocean and South-West Pacific Areas were agreed to by Australia.[2]

The directive to the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Ocean Area, which comprised both the North, Central and South Pacific Areas, described the purpose of his operations as follows:

(*a*) Hold the island positions between the United States and the South-West Pacific Area necessary for the security of the lines of communications between these regions; and for the supporting of naval, air and amphibious operations against the Japanese forces.
(*b*) Support the operations of the forces in the South-West Pacific Area.
(*c*) Contain the Japanese forces within the Pacific theatre.
(*d*) Support the defence of the continent of North America.
(*e*) Protect essential sea and air communications.
(*f*) Prepare for the execution of major amphibious offensives to be launched from the South Pacific Area and South-West Pacific Area.

The operations of the Supreme Commander in the South-West Pacific Area were to be designed to accomplish the following:

(*a*) Hold the key military regions of Australia as bases for future offensive action against Japan, and strive to check Japanese aggression in the South-West Pacific Area.
(*b*) Check the enemy advance across Australia and its essential lines of communication by the destruction of enemy combatant, troop and supply ships, aircraft, and bases in eastern Malaysia and the New Guinea-Bismarck-Solomon Islands region.
(*c*) Exert economic pressure on the enemy by destroying vessels transporting raw materials from recently-conquered territories to Japan.
(*d*) Maintain our position in the Philippine Islands.
(*e*) Protect land, sea and air communications within the South-West Pacific Area and its close approaches.
(*f*) Route shipping in the South-West Pacific Area.
(*g*) Support operations of friendly forces in the Pacific Ocean Area and in the Indian theatre.
(*h*) Prepare to take the offensive.

The directive also provided that the Combined Chiefs of Staff would exercise general jurisdiction over the grand strategic policy and over such related factors as were necessary for its proper implementation, including the allocation of forces and war materials. The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff would exercise jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to operational strategy. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Marshall, was to

[9] Telegram to Evatt, 7 Apr 1942; repeated to Dominions Office and to New Zealand.
[1] Telegram to Evatt, 7 Apr 1942; repeated to Dominions Office and to New Zealand.
[2] Telegram from Evatt, 12 Apr 1942.



Australian War Memorial

General Douglas MacArthur arrived at Spencer Street Station, Melbourne, from Adelaide on 21st March 1942 with his second-in-command, Lieut-General George H. Brett. He was met by the Minister for the Army (and Deputy Prime Minister), Mr Forde, and leading representatives of politics, administration and the fighting services.



Australian War Memorial

General MacArthur and Mr Curtin at the Advisory War Council meeting in Canberra on 26th March 1942. They had met for the first time that day.



Sydney Morning Herald

Mr F. M. Forde (Minister for the Army), General MacArthur and Mr J. B. Chifley (Treasurer), on 26th March 1942.



Sydney Morning Herald

General MacArthur with General Sir Thomas Blamey and the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin.

act as executive agency for the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff and all instructions to the Supreme Commander would be issued by or through him.

The particular points of control which Australia had raised were covered by the following memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff, to be read in conjunction with the directive:

> The proposals of the United States Chiefs of Staff (for operations in the South-West Pacific Area) made to the President as United States Commander-in-Chief are subject to review by him from the standpoint of higher political considerations and to reference by him to the Pacific War Council in Washington when necessary. The interests of the nations whose forces or land possessions may be involved in these military operations are further safeguarded by the power each nation retains to refuse the use of its forces which it considers inadvisable.

The right of appeal by a local commander to his own government and his freedom of communication with his own government were covered by a further assurance.[3]

The boundaries of the South-West Pacific Area were defined as follows:

> Western boundary, from Cape Kami, Luichow Peninsula, around coast of Tonkin Gulf, Indo-China, Thailand, and Malaya to Singapore, thence south to north coast of Sumatra, around east of Sumatra (leaving Sunda Strait to eastward of line) to point on coast of Sumatra at longitude 104° east, thence south to latitude 8° south, thence south-easterly towards Onslow to longitude 110° east, thence south.
>
> North and east boundary from Cape Kami, south to latitude 20° north, thence east to 130° east longitude, thence south to equator, along equator to longitude 165° east, thence south to latitude 10° south, thence west to latitude 17° south, longitude 160° east, thence south.

By letter from Curtin to MacArthur on 17th April the Australian Government assigned to the South-West Pacific Area under the Supreme Commander all combat sections of the Australian defence forces and notified the commanders of these forces that, from midnight on Saturday, 18th April 1942, all orders and instructions issued by the Supreme Commander in conformity with his directive would be considered by such commanders as emanating from the Australian Commonwealth.

The static portion of the army organisation such as lines of communication areas, fixed defences and ordnance workshops, and the functions of the R.A.A.F. in regard to personnel, provision and maintenance of aircraft, supply and equipment, works and buildings and training were not assigned to the Supreme Command.[4]

The initial United States allocation of forces to the area included 80 heavy bombardment planes, 171 medium bombardment, 87 light bombardment, 480 pursuit planes; two infantry divisions, one field artillery brigade, two anti-aircraft brigades and service units, making a total strength of 95,000 officers and men. Sixty thousand of the troops and all except about 50 aircraft were already in Australia or en route.[5] The Australian

[3] Advisory War Council Agendum 26/1942, 14 Apr, including telegrams from Evatt, 3 and 12 Apr 1942.

[4] War Cabinet Minute 2109, 17 Apr; Advisory War Council Minute 916 and War Cabinet Minute 2127, 28 Apr 1942.

[5] Telegram from Evatt, 23 Apr 1942.

allocation was 152 aircraft already in Australia and 246 allocated for dispatch before June,[6] and those of its naval ships which were then under Admiral Leary's command (the cruisers *Australia* and *Canberra,* the light cruiser *Hobart,* two destroyers and a few corvettes). The Australian Army in Australia included six infantry divisions, one armoured division, and two motor divisions. They were located:[7] 7th Division, A.I.F., South Australia; 1st Motor Division, 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions, New South Wales; 1st Armoured Division, A.I.F., 2nd Motor Division, 3rd and 4th Infantry Divisions, Victoria; 5th Division, Queensland. In addition a number of brigades were either organised in two forces of somewhat less than divisional strength—New Guinea Force with one brigade, and Northern Territory Force with two—or were independently employed. Altogether there were 26 infantry brigades, two armoured brigades, four motor brigades and the nucleus of a fifth, enough to form ten infantry or motorised divisions and one armoured division. These army formations in Australia represented 370,000 men; overseas there were still 49,000 men of the A.I.F., and if these returned they too would be part of the Australian allocation to the South-West Pacific Area.

On 18th April, from General Headquarters of the South-West Pacific Area, in Melbourne, the Commander-in-Chief issued General Order No. 1 assuming command, creating the subordinate commands and assigning to them the selected commanders—General Sir Thomas Blamey as Commander of Allied Land Forces, Lieut-General George H. Brett of Allied Air Forces, and Vice-Admiral Herbert F. Leary of Allied Naval Forces.

MacArthur quickly made clear his views on coordination with the Australian Government and the Australian services. Major proposals and general coordination with the Australian Government, he suggested, should be handled by his approaching the Prime Minister. Proposals involving considerable detail would be taken through the usual governmental channels and the methods at present in force regarding personnel and supply should continue, all rearward services remaining under the control of the respective governments with the minimum of disruption of the normal functions of the two Governments. Unified control would operate in combat. He proposed to establish unified combat command, placing Allied Land Forces under the control of the senior Australian Army officer and Allied Air Forces under the command of General Brett.[8]

In practice, a system was built up under which liaison between the Commander-in-Chief and the Australian Government was maintained by consultations between Curtin and MacArthur, with F. G. Shedden, as Secretary of the War Cabinet, arranging and facilitating the discussion. Curtin and MacArthur both gained a high regard for each other's qualities and confidence in each other and found that they could work together.

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[6] Members of the RAAF serving in Australia (including those being trained) numbered 61,732 at 15 April.

[7] These are headquarters locations. Actually one brigade of the Armoured Division was in New South Wales, one in Victoria; and one brigade of the 2nd Motor Division was in South Australia and one in Victoria.

[8] Advisory War Council Minute 869, 26 Mar 1942.

After a few months' experience, Curtin expressed himself as completely satisfied with the arrangements.[9]

Details in the system were worked out as time went on. One question discussed, arising out of the replacement in August of General Brett by Lieut-General George C. Kenney as Commander of the Allied Air Forces, was whether commanders could be changed without consultation with the Australian Government. This particular change had been made by the United States Chiefs of Staff, but MacArthur assured Curtin that he would be glad to consult him regarding any impending changes which might be contemplated in the future. In the case of Blamey there could of course be no variation in his station without prior consultation with the Government. A little later, when it was proposed to replace Vice-Admiral Leary by Vice-Admiral Arthur S. Carpender as Commander of the Allied Naval Forces, Curtin was informed of the change and agreed to it.[1]

5—TOTAL WAR

During the five weeks in which the Prime Minister, the War Cabinet and the Advisory War Council had been making the decisions of higher policy which have been recounted above, the Government was also applying itself to mobilising the total resources of the nation. The people of Australia had been bracing themselves to withstand the invasion.

In early February, when the news from Singapore was dark but not conclusive, the Government had commenced to prepare a National Economic Plan as "a complete charter for a total war effort in Australia". The plan, which was announced by Curtin on the 10th, after a meeting of the War Cabinet, was intended to bring about "government direction of industry and trade so that the production of war materials will be speeded up, the manpower of the community mobilised in the interests of the nation, and the incomes of all sections of the community equitably controlled". He commended it to the people both as a measure essential for the national war effort and as a move for social equality. Speaking in particular of the Economic Organisation Regulations, on 19th February, he said:

> These proposals introduce greater equality in our community and establish a basis for attaining unity of effort. This unity demands a common belief that we are not only fighting for our existence as a nation but also for new ideals of community life worthy of a great struggle. Even more important is the effect of the proposals upon the war effort itself. They will impart strength and stability to the economic structure and facilitate the transfer of resources to war needs. . . . Having produced a plan of simple, economic justice, the Government expects people to accept the basic features of a controlled economic system, and to march rapidly forward in completing the Government's plan for economic mobilisation.

The plan brought in controls so strict as to place the whole community virtually under Government direction. No capital could be sold or invested

[9] Advisory War Council Minute 1013, 6 Aug 1942.

[1] For the working of unified command from the point of view of the various services see the army, navy and air series of this history.

without Government permission. Prices of all goods and services were pegged. Profits were pegged at a maximum of 4 per cent on capital, and profits in excess of the prescribed maximum would either be passed on to the consumer in lower prices or taken in taxation. Interest rates were controlled, wages were pegged, although a "margin of tolerance" was allowed to enable constituted industrial tribunals to complete current negotiations or to make adjustments to remove anomalies between industries, and the system of cost-of-living adjustment of wages was continued. Control of manpower was tightened. Absenteeism in industry, for other than prescribed reasons, was made illegal for both employers and employees. Power was taken by the Government to proclaim any area under military control so that it could take effective action to meet an emergency. Speculation in commodities, such as forward dealings in foodstuffs, was prohibited.

The idea of such controls had been present since the early days of the war. The Curtin Government gave them a form much stronger and more rigid than had previously been considered tolerable.

> As the plan takes effect (Curtin said) the efforts of the whole community will be directed more and more to the essential needs of the war. The Government has already in progress its schemes for transferring labour from non-essential to essential industry.
>
> We have not lightly taken a decision involving such fundamental changes in the direction and control of the economic system. The plan is necessary because it is the only means by which we can throw the whole of our economic resources into a united effort. It is made possible because of the administrative machinery already developed by this and preceding governments. I ask the people of Australia to accept the assurance of the Government that the sacrifices involved will be equitably spread and that the men and materials available to us will be used to the best advantage. We are at a stage in our history when the struggle for survival as a nation overrides every other consideration.[2]

Effect was given to this plan and to associated proposals by a series of National Security Regulations notified between the 12th and 19th February. The National Security (Emergency Control) Regulations[3] gave the Minister for the Army power to declare an emergency in any part of Australia, and, after such a declaration, the senior officer in command of the military forces in the declared area might "do or cause or direct to be done any act or thing which he thinks necessary for the purpose of meeting any emergency arising in that part out of the war or for the purpose of providing for the defence of that part". The first application of the regulations was to the Territories of Papua and New Guinea on 12th February, the day the regulations were gazetted. The National Security (Mobilisation of Services and Property) Regulations,[4] administered by the Minister for Defence Coordination, enabled the Government to require any person resident in Australia to perform any specified services for the nation or to carry out duties indicated or to place his property at the service of the nation. There was no power to confiscate property but the

[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 18, pp. 14-23.
[3] Statutory Rules, No. 64, 12 Feb 1942. See also Section 6 of this chapter, and Appendix 2.
[4] Statutory Rules, No. 77, 19 Feb 1942 (notified on 20 Feb).

Commonwealth could require the use of any property for the better prosecution of the war. One of its earliest applications was against striking coalminers. The National Security (Economic Organisation) Regulations,[5] part of which were to be administered by the Treasurer and part by the Minister for Labour and National Service, enacted the economic controls.

On 18th February the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, Mr J. J. Dedman, announced the first of a series of decisions by Production Executive prohibiting the manufacture of a wide range of non-essential commodities and requiring manufacturers to provide information on the number and types of workers who would become available for war work as the result of the ban. At the same time prohibitions took the form of a ban on the use of various materials in the manufacture of goods which were not considered essential.[6]

In March the schedule of reserved occupations was again revised and exemptions from military service limited so as to retain in industry "only such male labour of military age as is essential for the adequate supply of foodstuffs, munitions of war and essential services to the forces, and to meet the essential minimum needs of civilian life".[7]

A new system of national registration was introduced taking the form of a requirement that all citizens should apply for a personal identity card.[8]

As far back as 10th February an additional number of men liable for service in the Australian Military Forces had been called up for full-time duty and on 6th March a proclamation was made under the *Defence Act* calling up two additional classes. All married men between 35 and 45 years of age and single men from 45 to 60 were later required to present themselves for medical examination and, if fit and not reserved for essential services, were drafted into the Australian Military Forces.

Compulsory service on the same lines as for the military forces was also imposed for the organisation of a Civil Constructional Corps to be employed on works undertaken by the Allied Works Council.[9] Although they could be brought under military discipline in an emergency, members of this corps differed from those called up under military impressment. It was expressly provided that they should be paid civilian award rates and that they should remain members of and continue to pay contributions to the unions to which they belonged. They did not, however, qualify for army entitlement, such as dependants' allowances, or for repatriation benefits.

The Allied Works Council had been established by National Security Regulations[1] to carry out works required for war purposes by the Allied

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[5] Statutory Rules, No. 76, 19 Feb 1942 (notified on 20 Feb).

[6] Control of Essential Articles (Materials) Order, 20 Feb, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 59, 23 Feb; Prohibition of Non-Essential Production Order No. 2, 20 Feb, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 59, 23 Feb; Prohibition of Non-Essential Production Order No. 1, 23 Feb, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 65, 27 Feb.

[7] Statement by the Minister for Labour and National Service, Mr E. J. Ward, 13 Mar. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 21, p. 15.

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 21, p. 15. National Security (Manpower) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 113, 11 Mar 1942.

[9] War Cabinet Minute 1955, 9 Mar 1942; National Security (Allied Works) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 170, 14 Apr 1942.

[1] National Security (Allied Works) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 88, 26 Feb 1942.

forces in Australia and its Director-General was given extensive power, including the power to requisition or compulsorily acquire any property (other than land).

Controls which had previously existed were more rigidly applied. Trade, employment and supplies were all under control. Travel was restricted. There was little that the citizen could do but accept direction. He was willing to do so because of danger. Even as he complied with directions regarding black-outs and accepted restriction of his movements he was reminded of the hazards of war. In March as house-owners and business-men, complying with the regulations, filled in their forms for a compulsory war damage insurance scheme they had before them in black and white the risk that their own roof might be holed or their own house blown to bits or their property either sacrificed to a "scorched earth" order at a time of retreat or occupation by the enemy.[2]

A decision by the Minister for the Army, confirmed by War Cabinet on 9th March, provided that when active service operations occurred in any area, the army should assume control over all transport facilities in that and contiguous areas and power would be taken by National Security Regulations for the army to require all civilian employees of railway systems, other transport facilities, and essential services in the area to carry on with their ordinary occupations unless otherwise directed.[3]

The controls introduced by the Curtin Government in February and March 1942 were more nearly absolute than could have been conceived at an earlier stage of the war. They did not pass unchallenged, as will be seen below, but they were acquiesced in by the vast majority of the people. War had struck at the Australian mainland. Invasion was expected and, if not invasion, a long and hard struggle to avert defeat, to check the Japanese, and, with Allied aid, slowly and painfully fight a way to victory over them. Those who looked beyond the present moment of fear began to see how great an effort was needed to win a war against nations who had prepared for war and had committed their total resources to it.

Although these regulations were immediately effective on notification they subsequently came under review in Parliament and some attempts were made at their disallowance. The Economic Organisation Regulations were tabled in Parliament by the Prime Minister on 25th February. Curtin said that they were indispensable to the total mobilisation of the country but the Government was quite ready to have them examined by a special committee representative of both Houses and of all parties in the Parliament. After consultation between leaders the committee was appointed, Curtin's uncontradicted interpretation of the situation being that members of the Government and Opposition had accepted the principles of the regulations and that the committee would examine them "constructively".[4]

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[2] National Security (War Damage to Property) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 79, 1942; *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 59, 23 Feb 1942. *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 123, 23 Apr, p. 1005, proclaimed the last day for lodging returns as within 28 days of 31 May 1942.

[3] War Cabinet Agendum 133/1942 and War Cabinet Minute 1982, 9th March 1942.

[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 33-4, 65 and 191. The members of the committee were the Treasurer (Chifley) and Minister for External Affairs (Evatt), Spender (UAP) and Anthony (UCP) from the Opposition in the House of Representatives, and Senators Armstrong (Labour) and Spicer (UAP).

The committee's report and an addendum by the Opposition members were tabled on 5th March. With the exception of Part V (Industrial Relations) the regulations were amended.[5] The Limitation of Profits (Part II), while substantially the same in text, would take effect from a date fixed by resolution of both Houses of Parliament but not earlier than 1st July. Part III (The Transfer of Certain Property) had prohibited sale or transfer of land and shares. The amendment permitted gifts of land and sale of country land if it had been used for agriculture for twelve months before and if the selling price was not more than 10 per cent above "a fair and reasonable price as at 10th February". Similarly other land could be sold if the vendor had owned it for 12 months before and the selling price was not more than 10 per cent above the approved value. Shares too might be sold if they had been owned by the vendor for five months and if they were sold at prices within the minimum and maximum ones to be set by the Treasurer in consultation with the stock exchanges. Part IV covered the fixing of maximum rates of interest. With the exception of overdrafts with banks or pastoral companies, transactions undertaken before the date of the relevant order would not be affected.

The committee disagreed on the retention of Part II (Limitation of Profits). Opposition members took the view that "the amended regulation can have no legal operation until the passing by the Parliament of legislation providing for confiscation of profits in excess of 4 per cent of the capital employed in any business". No legislation had been presented and, in any event, it would not operate earlier than 1st July 1942. In their view it anticipated the will of Parliament and would create perplexity. It was "so vague and uncertain in its terms as to render it impossible for members of the community to determine their obligations thereunder". The Opposition members firmly dissociated themselves from "the principles underlying the Government's proposals as at present formulated".

The Mobilisation of Services and Property Regulations were tabled without comment on 5th March, and next day, speaking to a proposal that the House adjourn until the 25th, the Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister to consider their withdrawal. They came under sporadic fire during the adjournment debate, which, as customary, covered all manner of subjects. From one hilltop Mr A. G. Cameron warned the House that, under the guise of preparing for war, the Labour Government was trying to establish in Australia an entirely new financial order. From another hilltop Mr Blackburn stressed the danger of arbitrary government if regulations were put into effect without opportunity for discussion in Parliament.[6] Blackburn made a suggestion, which had been put forward earlier in the war by Menzies, that parliamentary committees should be appointed to deal with regulations before they were gazetted. It was much easier to make representations to the Government about regulations before they were promulgated than to attack them afterwards.

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[5] National Security (Economic Organisation) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 110, 9 Mar 1942.
[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 239-54.

When the House resumed on the 25th Mr A. W. Fadden, as Leader of the Opposition, a position he had held since the defeat of his Ministry in October 1941, moved the adjournment of the House to discuss the Mobilisation of Services and Property Regulations. Then ensued a most curious debate during which the hardest attacks on the regulations were made not by the Opposition but by a minority of Curtin's own supporters.[7] Fundamentally the Opposition was found to be in agreement with the purpose of the regulations. Their chief concern was protecting the interests of the person called upon to render services or to place his property at the disposal of the Government. That was also the chief concern of most of the critics from the Government side. They may have had in their minds different pictures of the person whose interests were most in need of being protected but the general nature of their criticism was the same. Only a few lonely voices on either side were raised on any ground of principle relating to civil liberty.

Fadden, in moving the adjournment of the House, said that his objection was not to the principles underlying the regulations but to the method by which the powers conferred by them would be exercised. He feared abuse, and to provide a safeguard against abuse and facilitate the testing of authority by legal means he asked that any delegation of power or any demand for services or property should be given or confirmed in writing. Mr J. S. Rosevear, from the Government side, said the same thing, in a different context. On both sides of the House the majority clearly were in support of the regulations. From the centre, Mr A. W. Coles, the Independent whose vote defeated the former government, spoke briefly of the immediate danger from Japan. "In spite of all these circumstances," he said, "some honorable members seem to think that there is still time for us to debate our personal and property rights. The only way in which Australia can live up to the obligations which it now owes to the United States of America, which has conscripted men to serve in this country, is by entering the war without restraint. From now onward, every person in the community must implicitly trust the Government. We must use the whole of our human and material resources if we are to be saved in our extremity. This is not a time of emergency. It is a time of extremity."

Such attempts to excuse any action because of danger or advantage reached perhaps their most extreme expression in the mouth of a Country Party member, Mr H. L. Anthony:

> What is wrong with the totalitarian method of waging war? It has been most effective to date. If we are to wage this war with the whole of our resources, we shall have to do some of those things which the totalitarian powers have demonstrated count in the winning of battles and wars. We must organise our total resources with all the means at our command.

Curtin, however, based his defence of the regulations on the authority of Parliament. The regulations did what Parliament had authorised the Executive to do when it amended the *National Security Act* in 1940 so as to give the Government power to make regulations requiring persons to

[7] See *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 390-408.

place themselves, their services and their property at the disposal of the Commonwealth, so far as it appeared necessary or expedient to do so in order to secure the public safety and defence of the country and its territories. For the benefit of Labour critics he reinforced this argument by claiming the additional authority of the Australian Labour Party Conference of June 1940, in a resolution placing the whole of the resources of Australia—human, financial and material—at the disposal of the Government for the prosecution of the war and the defence of Australia. He gave assurances against abuse in either the delegation or use of the power. He agreed that oral instruction should be immediately followed by written instructions. The Government would be answerable to Parliament for the way in which it exercised this authority.

Even suggestions for the improvement of regulations, the need for which was not contested, were not seriously entertained. When Senator Spicer[8] offered non-political arguments as a lawyer for some reconsideration of regulations for the adjustment of contracts by reason of circumstances due to the war, his contribution was brushed off by a Government speaker who had obviously no knowledge and little interest in the usages of the law and the Senate as a whole did not think it worth taking to a vote.[9]

The main criticism of the regulations came from Blackburn, F. Brennan and A. A. Calwell on the Government side and Cameron on the Opposition side. Blackburn took a point—unanswered in the debate—that was fundamental to the discussion of democratic liberties. The regulations gave power to select the individual whose liberties were to be taken away from him. The *National Security Act* had never intended to delegate that power but only power to make laws which, in their essence, would be rules for the guidance and conduct of the people generally. Blackburn said:

> Under these regulations every person in this country holds his property and economic liberty, and, I suppose, civil liberty also, at the disposal of the Government of the day, and not only it, but also every person to whom the Government chooses to delegate power. A man may be ordered to give up properties, or surrender economic liberty, and if the Government has the power to do things like that, the Government may compel him to give up his civil liberty. A man whose expressions may be offensive to the Government may be forced to perform duties objectionable to him. He may be ordered to perform services in a part of the Commonwealth other than where he customarily resides. . . . The Government may say to one person: 'We shall take your property,' although it may allow other people to remain in the free enjoyment of their property. To my mind, that is despotism. It is fascism, naked and unashamed. The adoption of such measures is a disgrace to the country which adopts them. Any country that adopts such a system concurs in the worst acts of fascism and puts itself on a level with the countries that we are fighting. I concede that in a region where we were actually fighting the Government would without any regulation have this power, and perhaps the same would be true in a region in which immediate invasion was anticipated. That would be apart from any regulation or statute. But this regulation has no

[8] Hon Sir John Spicer. Senator 1940-44 and 1949-56; Attorney-General 1949-56; Chief Judge Commonwealth Industrial Court since 1956. B. Armadale, Vic, 5 Mar 1899.

[9] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170, pp. 334-55.

limitations as to territory, or conditions or anything else. My objection to these regulations is that they may be put into operation in any part of Australia against one man chosen at the arbitrary will of the Government although other people may be left entirely untouched by them. . . . An arbitrary rule of that description is not worthy of us. Moreover, it is antagonistic to the ideals for which we are fighting.

Challenged by Cameron, who asked why he did not move for the disallowance of the regulations, Blackburn said he had been unable to find a seconder. Cameron immediately offered his signature and later Brennan did the same. Calwell also spoke against the regulations, mainly, it would appear, because in his view they went beyond what the Labour Party had intended in June 1940, and the Labour Party had not since been consulted.

A month later, on 29th April, Blackburn, with Cameron as his seconder, moved for the disallowance of the regulations. He attacked them as arbitrary and unnecessary and found a close similarity between certain powers Hitler had recently assumed and those now granted to the Commonwealth Government. If it were a mark of decadence in Germany for the Fuehrer to be vested with absolute power, it was also a mark of decadence in Australia. His main case still rested on the difference between the regulations and other laws. No principles were laid down in the regulations for the guidance of the Minister. The granting or the withholding of directions was a matter which the Minister might decide for himself. Blackburn feared that such arbitrary power would be used against the workers.

His supporter, Cameron, expressed "a shrewd idea" that the power would be used by a Labour Government "to achieve certain objectives of the Labour Party under the pretext of giving effect to wartime organisation and administration".

There was a close correspondence between this group of reasons used against arbitrary action and some of the arguments which, in Blackburn's words, had been used to give a fictitious popularity to the regulations.

Elements who form the extreme Right content themselves by saying that, after all, the regulations are being used, or threats have been made to use them, against no one but the workers. The extreme Left comfort themselves with the thought that if they wait long enough the regulations will be used against owners of property.

The debate on Blackburn's motion was remarkable chiefly for the number of Labour supporters who spoke in criticism of the regulations but eventually voted, in conformity with their party's decision, against their disallowance, and for the number of Opposition supporters who spoke in favour of the regulations, subject only to assurances regarding the manner of their use. Ward, a member of the Ministry, declared that their application would add to industrial unrest. Calwell found himself able in a single speech to disagree with the regulations, to advocate increased governmental control of industry, to taunt the Opposition with having lacked moral courage to bring in such regulations when they were in office, to declare that Evatt had drafted the Mobilisation of Services and Property Regulations "in a moment of panic" because "no democrat in his right senses would ever forge such a weapon to be used some day,

unfortunately, by the agents of reaction"; to argue that they were unnecessary for the conduct of the war; to repeat his view that they had not been authorised by the Australian Labour Party Conference as Curtin had claimed; and to give his final word in favour of the complete abolition of the regulations. Then, out of regard for party loyalty, he voted to retain them. In the course of his speech he had also found time to ridicule the members of the Opposition for being unable to make up their minds.

After a speech in which his protest against the regulations was linked with an emotional reply to current criticism of the coalminers, against whom the regulations had already been invoked, Rosevear came to the question how he would vote:

> The Labour Party has decided how it will vote, and I intend to vote with my party (he said). I shall do so because I shall not cast a vote which will have the effect of destroying a Labour Government. I realise that the alternative to this Government is a Government composed of members of the Opposition whose hands are itching to lay hold of the dreadful weapon which we have forged. They will not lay hold of it with my help.

The whole debate could be drawn on freely to show that to discuss a question of democratic liberty without recourse to a set of principles is as futile as trying to build without a level or a plumb-line.

Menzies made an attempt to measure the regulations by some yardstick other than the consideration of who was in office or what would appeal to one section of the population. Such regulations should be designed directly to forward the war effort and serve the public safety and defence of Australia. Such regulations should reasonably and intelligibly convey to citizens some adequate conception of the duties and liabilities which they imposed. Such regulations should include proper safeguards against misapplication when they provided for possible interference with life, liberty and property or with normal civil rights. He found that the regulations did not satisfy his second principle. His doubts under the third heading would be lessened by the acceptance of the Opposition's suggestions and by the Prime Minister's assurances regarding the delegation of authority and the giving of directions to citizens in writing. He concluded:

> Here are regulations which are not, in the true sense of the word, regulations, since they regulate nothing; because a regulation is something that lays down a rule. This is not regulation; it is—if I may use the word—unregulation, because it hands over discretion to unnamed, unknown, and unaccountable people. I have had very great heartburnings as to whether such a provision should be allowed even in the state of emergency in which we now live. I have been left in grave doubts about the matter. Those doubts would be sensibly minimised if the Prime Minister would agree to make some amendment that would satisfy the third criticism I have made. If that were done, I should feel that I ought to fall back on the principle that I stated . . . at the beginning of my speech; that was, that when your country is in danger, and when we are in doubt as to whether the Government ought to have a certain power, such doubt ought to be resolved in favour of the Government. I say that without hesitation, although the Government of the day may be, politically speaking, my strongest possible opponents.

So Menzies, like the majority of the Opposition, voted to maintain the regulations.

Blackburn's motion for the disallowance of the Mobilisation of Services and Property Regulations was lost by 54 votes against 7. He, a Labour man expelled from the Labour Party, found his only support in a group of South Australian U.A.P. members and a Country Party man from Western Australia.[1]

An attempt was made by Opposition members in the Senate to obtain the disallowance of parts of the National Security (Coal Control) Regulations[2] and of National Security (Waterside Employment) Regulations.[3] In each case the disallowance was moved by Senator G. McLeay (South Australia) and Leader of the Opposition. The issues concerned alleged discrimination by the Government between different interests. In the one case, the Opposition said, coal-mine owners were brought completely under the control of the Coal Commission and made subject to fines and other penalties if they did not observe conditions laid down in the regulations, whereas the commission did not have the same power over the employees and if employees did not observe conditions they would be dealt with by the management committee of their own union. In the other case the protest was made that the regulations had been used by the Government in order to eliminate one waterside union and establish the authority of the Waterside Workers' Federation—a charge which Government Senators admitted insofar as they argued that they were attempting to prevent shipowners from using the Permanent and Casual Wharf Labourers' Union in preference to the Waterside Workers' Federation. Both attempts at disallowance failed in a close vote.[4] A motion by the Opposition for the disallowance of the Waterside Employment Regulations was also moved in the House of Representatives and was rejected in a party vote. The debate was perhaps chiefly remarkable because it took place at a time when General MacArthur, after having been honoured at a Parliamentary dinner, was occupying a seat on the floor of the House as a distinguished visitor. Australian newspaper commentators painted a contrast between the greatness of the task he had come to do and what was, in their view, the unimportance of the matters in which Parliament was engaged.[5] A motion to disallow the Manpower Regulations[6] was made on the grounds that the regulations abolished an employer's common law rights in respect of the dismissal of employees in protected industries and denied the employee the right to appeal against the Director-General of Manpower's refusal to let him change his employment. The arguments for disallowance chiefly referred to efficiency of industry and avoiding discontent among workers. The motion failed.[7]

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[1] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170, pp. 628-34, 714-68.
[2] Statutory Rules, No. 10, 9 Jan 1942.
[3] Statutory Rules, No. 19, 28 Jan 1942.
[4] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170, pp. 72 et seq, 103 et seq.
[5] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170, p. 486 et seq.
[6] Statutory Rules, No. 102, 6 Mar 1942, which amended No. 34, 31 Jan.
[7] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170, pp. 533 et seq and 622 et seq.

The acceptance of direction and control by the Government over most activities was the most striking demonstration of the way in which danger had struck deep into Australian habit.

Even casual observation of the surface of life revealed other changes. In the big cities black-outs were enforced. A.R.P. workers were at their posts nightly. Firewatching was constant in most large buildings. Sirens were installed, and slit trenches and basement shelters hurriedly completed. More windows and doorways were protected with sandbags. Other windows were criss-crossed with tape or, more efficiently, covered with timber to prevent the shattering of glass. An incidental result of the use by some of medical sticking plaster to protect windows was an acute shortage of this item for its normal purpose. Tramcars and buses were painted in drab colours and sometimes in camouflage designs. The stirrup pump, the wooden shovel and the bucket of sand became common objects in office corridors.

With the military call-up and manpower diversion many familiar faces were missed by the city worker on his daily round. Occupations were being changed. Men and women in uniform became more numerous. The main railway stations often seemed like great depots for troops—troops standing around or sitting on their kitbags, going to camp, returning from leave, moving to a new area. The daily talk of civilians became the talk of war—infiltration, guerilla tactics, scorched earth, fifth columnists, machine-gun strafing, ack-ack and low-level bombing. Official injunctions to be careful of security, not to discuss troop movements, not to discuss war work, not to discuss anything, became more frequent in public places.[9] Factories, business premises, schools and hospitals had air raid drill. There was much talk, both official and unofficial, of plans for evacuation and withdrawal. The V.D.C. trained feverishly on Sunday mornings and could see itself within a matter of weeks hurling its bombs or its flaming incendiary mixtures into the tracks of advancing tanks.

Up at Canberra, which appears to have been more badly scared than any other part of the continent, typists were rattling away in the Government departments, copying important documents so that if the Government should have to move to a temporary capital farther south, or, if the main body of records were destroyed in enemy air raids, the Government could survive the loss of paper. The contemporary records reveal an expectation at Canberra, almost a certainty, that Canberra would be bombed, perhaps occupied. They reveal a similar expectation that there would be retreat down the eastern coast before the invading enemy. At a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 18th February, when members were discussing Rabaul, the question of demolition was raised and members were informed that the Chiefs of Staff were examining the whole question of a scorched earth policy in Australia.[1] The National Security (War Damage to Property) Regulations[2] covered damage as the result of destruction of property

[9] The use of jingles which appeared on official envelopes included such pieces as "Careless Chatter Can Cause Casualties", "Idle Gossip Sinks Ships."

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 768.

[2] Statutory Rules, No. 79, 23 Feb 1942.

or goods to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy. A section of the press, writing about the "lessons of Malaya", urged complete preparations for demolition as one of the means of thwarting the enemy, and, in New South Wales particularly, the State authorities, in exercising their functions in regard to civil defence, accepted the same doctrine of "destroy and withdraw". According to statements made in the House by a Federal member considerable confusion was caused by the conflict of advice from the military authorities and from State authorities who were organising and planning a "scorched earth" policy and even instructing farmers what they were to kill and wreck before abandoning their farms. The member asked for an authoritative statement to end the disagreement between advocates of the "stand fast policy" and those of the "run policy".[3] Already, the army had tried to meet the position by obtaining powers by National Security Regulations, notified on 9th March,[4] to prohibit a person from leaving an area to be evacuated; to prohibit the return of persons to an area from which they had been removed, and itself to remove or destroy any stock, buildings, works or installations that might be useful to the enemy. The army view was that if there was any scorched earth policy it should be carried out only under the direction of the army.

The services had also obtained power by National Security Regulations to collect launches and other small craft from all harbours, rivers, estuaries and lakes in Australia, for the lesson of Malaya had been that the advancing Japanese freely used such chance aids to cross rivers or to creep down the coast behind the defending force.[5] On the northern and north-western coasts the luggers of the pearling fleet were collected for removal to the south. The shifting of beef cattle from the far north to the south, both for their value to Australia and to prevent them from providing free supplies to the Japanese in case of invasion was organised. Travelling mostly in small mobs of 1,200 or 1,300 head, and spaced out for the sake of their feed and water, over 80,000 head of cattle were droved distances of more than 1,000 miles during 1942.[6]

In the coastal areas, too, the "lessons of Malaya" and of the European invasions by Germany were also applied. Signboards were removed from railway stations, roads and public buildings and any advertising signs that might give a clue to the locality were obliterated.[7] Even harmless names such as "Lyre Bird Glen" were taken down from the tourist tracks in one Blue Mountains (New South Wales) town. People were counselled to destroy their road maps lest they fall into the hands of the enemy.

There continued to be a good deal of what was termed "voluntary evacuation of non-effectives". In the case of hospitals, schools, institutions

[3] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170, pp. 554-5.

[4] National Security (General) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 105, 9 Mar 1942.

[5] Immobilization of Vessels Order, *Commonwealth Gazette,* No. 86, 17 Mar 1942. In New South Wales alone about 17,500 "non-essential" boats were concentrated in 40 up-stream depots along the coastline. In June 1942, following a change in the state of the war, the return of these craft to their owners commenced.

[6] See Dora Birtles, *The Overlanders* (1946); and the film "The Overlanders", produced by Michael Balcon, directed by Harry Watt. The players included Chips Rafferty, John Nugent Hayward and Daphne Campbell.

[7] Removal of Direction Signs Order, *Commonwealth Gazette,* No. 73, 6 Mar 1942.

and organisations for children this was planned and, before long, was considerably expedited by the growing demand by the war services, including the American Army, for urban accommodation. Some school buildings were requisitioned for war purposes and the scholars and staff transferred elsewhere. Apart from such arrangements as these, however, there continued to be a certain amount of confusion caused by conflicting State and Federal advice as to whether patriotic duty required the individual who was not engaged in war work to stay where he was or to go to some safer place. A minority went anyhow, simply because of their love of safety, but after a time they came back. Many of those who ran from the city were the type who would find a country town uncongenial. With the progress of summer, the flies, heat and lack of water in the little places in which they had sought refuge helped to restore their courage to face life on the coast.

In the country some areas were drawn directly into the war effort by the establishment of a military camp or aerodrome or war industry and the consequent swarms of construction workers and servicemen making exceptional demands on the town's slender resources of stores, beer and entertainment. In other areas war made country folk more lonely. Before Japan attacked there had been considerable alarm at the numbers of men leaving rural industries. Between 1939 and 1942, 93,000 had gone; in 1943 a further 41,000 would go. Men left of their own will or were called up into war work. The old folks and the girls carried on, and sometimes the girls left, too. Little towns slumped. Life became harder and was cluttered up with regulations which had little local meaning or application.

Attempting to recapture the mood of those times by studying the contemporary record, one is struck by the fact that a great deal of the official propaganda and Ministerial statements revealed fear and indicated doubt about the Australian people's response to the exceptional demands. Yet whenever the people themselves expressed their feelings they showed themselves in a different light. In opinions held on the state of public morale there appeared to be a big gap between the Australian Government and the Department of Information on the one hand and the general public on the other. The general public was not worried about its state of mind. Perhaps that is what the officials mistook for complacency. In fact many members of the public grew weary of "being harangued in the humiliating manner which suggests that Australians are cravens, whose courage needs the continual spur of exhortation by Ministers".[8] The perceptive Australian novelist Eleanor Dark said: "In my opinion one of the worst effects of this war upon Australians is that it is beginning to make them 'morale conscious'. . . . We are being lectured, scolded, bullied, alarmed and even taunted about it to such an extent that if our powers that be are not careful we shall be acquiring a dangerously morbid and hypochondriac interest in it."[9] The fear-inspiring posters of the Department of Informa-

[8] Letter published in the *Age* (Melbourne), 21 Feb 1942.

[9] *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 27 Mar 1942. The same writer, in her novel *The Little Company* (1945), sets down the recaptured memory of those days and of the radio broadcasts of the Department of Information: "People were studying maps. They were measuring distances. They were saying: How many planes have we? How many tanks? How many of our fighting

tion, particularly the one showing a hideous Japanese soldier crawling over the top of the globe towards Australia, so annoyed the Premier of Queensland that, with much public approval, he banned their display in his State and suggested that the right slogan should be not "He's coming south" but "Go north and throw them into the sea." His sentiment, linked with an objection to the military plans that might have abandoned northern Queensland, was "Fight wherever an enemy lands." A Sydney newspaper, carrying out one of its catch-as-catch-can "investigations" reported that only 54 per cent of the persons it interviewed expected the Japanese to invade Australia. Perhaps that may suggest that Curtin had ground for thinking the people complacent inasmuch as they did not share his view. But, in answer to another question whether they would fight the Japanese even if there were no early reinforcements 93 per cent said "Yes." That suggests a fighting mood.[1] In contrast with any of the earlier crises of the war, the Australian people in March 1942, as far as their opinion is revealed in the press, by their actions and by their acceptance of the direction of their lives, were aroused by danger as they had never been stirred before and, having been aroused, they had not turned away but were bracing themselves to grapple with their foes no matter how numerously they might come.

There was a common note in all published comment. The *Australian Worker* wrote: "It is not in the Australian make-up to squib a fight, no matter how hard and bitter the conflict may be." The *Sydney Morning Herald* said: "There can surely be no Australian to whom the possibility of conquest by the Japanese would not seem incomparably worse than death in opposing them. Our lives we can offer in this cause but the freedom of Australia never." The accent was different but the thought was the same.

Yet the Curtin Government consistently acted as though it expected Australians to be scared. When a newspaper correspondent wrote an article referring to the laying of barbed wire on beaches, the Minister for the Army thought it necessary to make a public statement telling people not to be "alarmed", to "reassure" them that the preparations were being made to protect them and to counsel them "not to imagine" that their particular beach was the most likely point of attack. The War Cabinet thought it necessary to minimise the losses in an air raid on Darwin for fear that the truth might cause a panic.

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men are overseas? They were thinking of the vast, unprotected northern coastline of their continent, reckoning the range of bombers, worrying about rubber and petrol, wondering where their little Navy was. They were looking inside themselves, too, estimating their own qualities, finding no reason to doubt themselves until the voice of the Department of Information bade them to do so. . . . Hate propaganda of the crudest sort insulted their humanity; fear propaganda insulted their courage; querulous scolding, impertinent jibes, and sickly sentimentality stabbed viciously at their nerves. Marty said one night, silencing the voice with a savage flick of her finger: 'If our "morale" stands up to this, it's indestructible.' "

[1] C. E. W. Bean, the Australian historian, writing after the event, recalled that when the Japanese seemed likely to invade north Queensland "a few highly-placed people in Canberra made no attempt to hide their belief that the morale of Australians was anything but what it should be", and continued: "My own impression at the time was that it was shakiest at the top; that some, though by no means all, Ministers and officials, a thousand miles or more from the spot and faced by strange and threatening administrative prospects, failed in their trust of their own people; and that, while elements in Canberra might have been in a state of jitters, the people of Queensland, if our opponents had landed, would have furnished the world with a history of guerilla resistance that would have illuminated our nation's name even if the struggle had finished us."—*Sunday Herald* (Sydney), 13 Feb 1949.

Conclusive evidence on public opinion cannot be obtained for there was no scientific testing of it at the time. At most, there are opinions on the state of opinion. Yet, going backwards and forwards over what was recorded in those times and over the memory of living in them, one feels that the War Cabinet miscalculated when it made this decision to hush up the Darwin losses. There was a strange conflict, too, between this fear of frightening the people and the jumbled activities of the Department of Information, which at one moment seemed to be trying to scare everyone into action with the threat of invasion and at another moment was most ponderously counselling them to be calm and resolute in microphone voices of the kind mostly used to break news that someone in the family has died. Curtin himself said on 25th February—less than a week after he had dampened the bad news from the north:

> What is wrong with this country at the moment is a lack of realisation of the danger that confronts us and the urgency of the tasks that have to be done. . . . Every man and woman in Australia today has to realise that this country is in imminent peril and that a degree of self-discipline is exacted by the grim facts that confront us. Our ordinary way of life has been destroyed, not by government decree, but by the conditions arising from the actuality of the struggle. The assumption that things can go on as before for this man, that man or the other man is too absurd. Tanks, planes and bombs produce revolution in the civil order. They transform the ways of life and they do it all the more rudely when there has been no preparation to meet their coming. This country has no time to spare for fooling about or thinking 'it won't happen'.[2]

If people who write letters to the editors of newspapers are any guide, the Prime Minister was striking the wrong note in these and earlier statements telling the people, in effect, that he was confident that they were going to be brave. "I do wish Mr Curtin would discontinue speaking to the people of Australia as though they were school children," wrote one correspondent. "Why do we have to be fed daily on a lot of flattery and praise? . . . For goodness sake let us be spoken to as grown-up men and women with a knowledge of the seriousness of the position." Another letter-writer commented: "I have just listened to the national news from Canberra, prefaced by the announcer who told the Australian public that the Cabinet Ministers walked to the meeting calm but resolute. . . . Did anyone expect them to walk to the meeting showing definite signs of the jitters? Aren't they Australians and of the same spirit as the thousands that are listening?"[3]

A fortnight later when a report was published that some Federal Ministers were concerned at what they considered a lowering of morale in Sydney and other cities, they were challenged by a professor of psychology and told moreover that they were foolish. "The constant ominous note in Government statements both on the air and in the press is dangerous and unnecessary. People are fully aware of the danger and don't need to be told."[4]

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[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 20, p. 8.
[3] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 Feb 1942.
[4] Professor H. Tasman Lovell quoted in *Daily Telegraph*, 12 Mar 1942.

It might be argued that even the best-informed member of the public did not know as exactly as members of the Government how immediate the danger was and how slender were the means for meeting it, and the simple fact that the writers of letters were so perky was a reflection of their blissful ignorance. The circumstances of the various Ministerial statements, however, suggest that the origin of Ministers' concern may be found in the fact that they had been looking rather too narrowly at particular sections of national life and administration. They had not received the full response they had hoped to receive, in cooperation with State Governments, in restricting the sale of beer or curtailing race meetings. They had some difficulties with workers refusing to work for only award rates, and other difficulties in keeping men on the job at weekends. They had encountered some attempts to get around the prices regulations. An appeal to stores to cut down advertising on luxury lines and thus aid the campaign against spending had met with little response. Even when they went in quest of dead timber to burn charcoal for producer-gas units some land owners had either refused to sell or wanted unreasonable prices. There were still sporadic strikes in the coal mines, even at the height of the crisis. The administrative worries over sectional matters such as these—even although some of them could be immediately overcome by enforcing the Government's will by means of National Security Regulations—might well have had a cumulative effect and left Ministers feeling that they alone could realise the gravity of the situation and that there was a real problem of persuading the people of Australia that the way of life had to be changed. Furthermore, the coercion which they were obliged to use, particularly when used in matters affecting bodies of wage-earners, was so much against the habit of thought which some of them had developed when so recently in Opposition criticising the previous Government, that their minds could only have been comfortable if their minds also accepted the idea that such coercion of the people was necessary because of some shortcoming in the people.

Any dictatorship necessarily rests on a low estimate of the individual. Many strange and hidden mental twists take place when a person who does not believe in dictatorship feels that he has to become a dictator. There were among Curtin's colleagues some who took to dictatorship as calmly as a man puts on his own shoes and they showed no signs of suffering any discomfort then or later in the exercise of total powers. For Curtin it was not so. His place in this time of crisis and his leadership through the next three years of war, both in its firmness and in its occasional irresolution, will never be understood unless the contrast is seen between the liberalism of his basic political thinking and the authoritarian role he was obliged to assume and did assume in February 1942. That month offers the material for the study not only of the mind of a people but also the mind of their leader.

Other evidence of undue excitement was also more evident in political circles than among the general public. One manifestation was the cry for the internment of all aliens and, accompanying it, a great readiness to

suspect any strange person of being a traitor. Another manifestation was the excitement generated over the announcement that certain persons associated with a movement known as "Australia First" had been interned and that a plot to collaborate with the Japanese had been exposed.[5] A great readiness was shown in the Government of the day to believe persons guilty before they had been proved guilty and, while some members of Parliament might talk of the need to bring people to trial, the majority were on the side of "playing safe" and putting suspects out of the way, and in this particular case, perhaps for lack of political sympathy with the persons concerned, most of the customary defenders of civil liberty were silent.[6]

Another element in public opinion at this time was the frequent statements in regard to anti-British sentiment, either to allege that it was being expressed or to deny that it had been expressed.[7] There is no doubt that with the fall of Singapore there was frequent public comment laying blame on England—comment so sharp and so general as to provoke a strong rejoinder from those who thought otherwise. There was also no doubt that, recognising military realities, many Australians looked, as their Government did, to the United States of America for help, and with that hope for aid came an eagerness to believe and say all that was best about America, even if it meant making comparisons to the disadvantage of Britain. Yet, at the same time, the vehemence with which the Labour politician was always denying that he was anti-British and proclaiming his devotion to the British Commonwealth was an indication not only that charges were being made and that consciences were tender, but that the large majority of the public were recognised by the politician as being devoted to the British link. The appearance of anti-British sentiment was also coloured by the energy with which the Government was devoting itself to the two tasks of obtaining a more effective voice in the higher councils of war and of obtaining reinforcement for the Pacific. These attempts appeared more often as a struggle against the obduracy of London than as a struggle with Washington. When one looks at the Australian scene through the contemporary eyes of the outside world, whether Allied, neutral or enemy, it is clear that outside observers received the impression, which doubtless some of them were eager to receive, that Australia was critical of the Motherland. Accepting the Government's protestations that it was strongly pro-British, the fact remains that it was not careful enough to avoid giving the contrary impression. Internally, a certain amount of

[5] See Appendix 5, "The Australia First Movement."

[6] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170.

[7] See J. W. C. Wand, *Has Britain Let Us Down?* (1942). The author, Archbishop of Brisbane at that time, and English by birth and training, wrote: "The most audacious piece of Fifth Column activity hitherto seen in this country has been the effort to belittle Britain's part in the war." The writer concluded, after extolling the British war effort: "I do not believe for one moment that there is any large body of opinion in this country that has any other feeling for Britain and the British people than that which has been expressed in these pages. There are, however, as is well-known, a handful of people, not all of them in internment camps, who for their own purpose would willingly stab Britain in the back. . . . But unfortunately a few unhappy phrases used by politicians, and a certain mishandling of the news in the press and over the air, may give the impression that the few disaffected and disloyal propagandists have more support than they actually enjoy." Earlier he had spoken of the official Australian news over the air: "It is not long since the announcement, 'This is Canberra,' sent a shiver of uneasy expectation through every loyal listener at the 7 p.m. session." He added that at the time of writing a more objective statement was being given.

political bickering seethed around this issue. Public discussion and parliamentary debate on the appointment of Mr Casey, Australian Minister to Washington, to a post as Minister of State in the British War Cabinet, to succeed Mr Oliver Lyttelton at Cairo, had more to do with relations with Britain than anything else. There were some who saw it as an honour to Casey and to Australia that he should be chosen. Others thought that Churchill had offended by trying to "pinch" a man from the Australian Government and that Casey had not been a good Australian to accept.[8]

Those whose patriotism and loyalty had been traditionally centred in the British Isles complained frequently at this time, too, that in the news programmes of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, in the substitution of local programmes for the British Broadcasting Commission commentators whom they had previously heard, and in the presentation of news items from Canberra, the British point of view was being excluded. To others this seemed but the rightful assertion of Australianism.

The most serious effect of this was not on Australian-British relations. They survived. It was felt most in the harmony of the Australian people themselves. A subtle form of disaffection crept in when people became captious over each other's patriotism. It aggravated the occupational division and the concern about equality of sacrifice which had been apparent in the earlier years of the war.

A third deleterious influence was undoubtedly the official preoccupation with the question of evacuation and demolition. Everyone was being accustomed to the idea that when an invasion came they would have to give ground.

At this time there were marked differences in the experience of war between various parts of Australia. Northern Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia had an experience of the crisis different from that of the rest of the continent. They were the areas nearest to the advancing enemy and, despite any policy of resisting the Japanese wherever he attacked, they knew that they were in fact practically defenceless. For the people of southern Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria talk of invasion meant a fight with some prospect of success. People in the more remote parts of Australia knew that, though they would fight, they would be certain to be overwhelmed. From northern Queensland there was some chance of withdrawal, unless the Japanese attacked lower down and cut them off. In anticipation of attack there was also some unofficial evacuation of civilians. The reported movement of about 6,000 civilians through Cairns and Townsville has been mentioned earlier. The population of Western Australia, however, had not the slightest prospect that in the event of invasion they could retire anywhere. They would stand. If the attack were light the troops allocated to their defence might beat it off. If it were heavy the State would be overrun and occupied by the Japanese. They would not receive any reinforcement. Local plans were made for retirement of part of the civilian population if necessary but the possibility of making such plans was limited by the lack of local water

[8] See the fuller treatment of this question in Chapter 6, Section 2, of this volume.

supplies and even of sufficient food supplies in inland areas. The population waited in a fatalistic calm, receiving throughout February thousands of refugees from the Netherlands Indies and survivors from Singapore who had escaped immediately before or after the surrender. War was brought close to Perth. A correspondent, writing in mid-March, said: "The city is full of stories of escape and shipwreck; the Malayan campaign is still being taken to pieces and still producing sorry controversies." The same correspondent added: "The West is out on a limb and may be left there—such is the apprehension, deriving in part from the normal feeling of remoteness from the East and in part from undeniably strong considerations of geography, strategy and transport."[9]

There was no panic, or any expression of dismay stronger than the bitter reflection that one of the main arguments used to induce them to enter the Federation had been that the Commonwealth could assure their defence. Yet now, unless the British could bring naval strength into the Indian Ocean, they would be occupied.

6—BOMBS ON AUSTRALIAN SOIL

The Northern Territory and the northernmost region of Western Australia were the only parts of the mainland to come immediately under enemy attack. The two external territories of Papua and New Guinea, however, not only suffered heavy and devastating raids, and the disruption of all civilian life, but passed under military rule and became a battleground.

The story of civilian experience in these territories is told in greater detail in another part of this volume[1] and the military events of 1942 provide the material for other volumes in the series.[2] Here in briefer outline the political aspects of what happened in early 1942 will be set down.

The territories of Papua and New Guinea occupied the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and the outlying islands to the eastward, embracing a land area of 183,540 square miles—twice the size of the United Kingdom—and the centres of settlement and subsequently of military operations were scattered over a vast area of land and sea extending for a thousand miles from west to east and 600 miles from north to south.

The New Guinea territory, formerly a German colony, had been administered by Australia under a mandate from the League of Nations since 1920. Papua had been an Australian possession since 1906. Each territory had its own separate Administration, responsible to the Australian Government.

In the two territories the total of the known indigenous population was less than a million (about half the number that has since been found to exist), the European population totalled 7,800 and the Chinese (all in New Guinea) 2,200. Gold and copra, mainly from New Guinea, and rubber and copra from Papua, were the main exports but by the middle

[9] *Herald* (Melbourne), 20 Mar 1942.

[1] See Appendix 2, "Civilian Wartime Experience in the Territories of Papua and New Guinea."

[2] See particularly D. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*, and L. Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*, pp. 392-417, and 653-74.

of 1940 export of copra had practically ceased, and the industry had been placed under Government control.[3] Of the immigrant population most were engaged in mining, on plantations, in stores, in Christian mission work or in the administrative services. Nearly all of them were on the coastal fringe or in the gold-mining district of Wau-Bulolo. There was limited contact between the two territories.

The Papuan and New Guinea settlers and missionaries had a fine record of exploration and pioneering endeavour and generally had won the regard and trust of the native people with whom they had come into contact. This they largely retained during the war, when the native people were mainly responsible for leading intelligence and guerilla operations behind the Japanese lines. Among the European pioneers were men of great courage and outstanding gifts of leadership. On the Australian mainland interest in the territories, except among persons directly linked with its trade, the missions and administration, was scant and knowledge was limited. For twenty years the territories had been remote from Australian political events and seldom under public discussion. In the governmental structure at Canberra at the outbreak of war their affairs were handled in an obscure branch of the Prime Minister's Department, staffed by only eight or nine officers, including clerks, typists and a messenger.

Rabaul, the scene of the first Japanese air raid, afforded a peacetime example of the lack of urgency given to territories affairs in Canberra. In May 1937 a volcanic eruption had led to proposals to shift the capital of the territory from Rabaul to the New Guinea mainland. Another eruption, in June 1941, came before a decision had been taken and, with this explosive reminder, the Australian Cabinet decided in September 1941 to move the capital to Lae. At the time when the Japanese struck the town, the transfer of official departments to the mainland had started but commercial firms were still uncertain whether they would move.

There had been some defence preparations. On 18th February 1941, during the term of the Menzies Government, the War Cabinet authorised the despatch to Rabaul of an A.I.F. battalion and the installation of coast defences. The question of raising a native battalion was also to be examined. It was estimated that with the locally-raised New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, the native police and proposed additions, the equivalent of about an infantry brigade, plus coast defences, would be provided for the whole of the New Guinea territory and that it would be located mainly around Rabaul.[4]

In March and April the battalion arrived and by the end of the year a coastal battery of two 6-inch guns and searchlights, an anti-aircraft battery of two guns and other small detachments were in place—a garrison totalling about 1,400 perched in one corner of the vast expanse of sea, reef, mountain and jungle. The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles added 80 men. Under a Civil Warden an Air Raid Precautions plan had been prepared.

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[3] National Security (Copra Control) Regulations, Statutory Rules, Nos. 133, 234, 239. *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 196, 1 Oct 1941.

[4] War Cabinet Minute 816, 18 Feb 1941.

By January 1942 most of the women and children of Australian families had left the territory. As early as March 1941 the War Cabinet had approved in principle a proposal for the evacuation of those not engaged in essential work and in July had instructed that plans for evacuation should be completed and a voluntary movement encouraged at once. In November, to encourage further this voluntary movement, the new Government issued a warning that in the event of war it would not be possible to make any special arrangements to transfer women and children to Australia. After some hesitation, compulsory evacuation was ordered in December.

By January 1942 the defences had been added to by four Hudson and ten Wirraway aircraft of the R.A.A.F.—all that was available but certain to be inferior to anything to which they were likely to be opposed.

The first Japanese raid was on the morning of 4th January; there was another in the evening. In the next fortnight there were three more raids. All were clearly concentrating on the airfields and military installations and this gave rise to the fear that landings were planned. Convinced that this was the case, Page,[5] the Government Secretary, who was the senior officer in the Administration in the absence of the Administrator at Lae, telegraphed to Canberra on 15th January asking that immediate consideration be given to the evacuation of the whole of the civilian population, and the withdrawal of civil administrative officers either to the New Guinea mainland or to Australia. He said:

> It now appears that the defence policy for the territory is to be limited to demonstration of force rather than any serious attempt to hold the territory against any enemy attack in force and there are indications that such an attack will take place in the near future.

His reading of the situation was correct. On the 20th a major Japanese air attack was delivered by a total of probably 120 aircraft followed by a further attack on the 22nd and a successful landing on the 23rd. Simultaneously there was an unopposed landing at Kavieng in New Ireland, garrisoned by a detachment of an Independent Company.

Page's message did not evoke any effective decision. On the 20th, in Canberra, a message was drafted, still not containing any clear direction, but this message never reached Rabaul. It reached Lae but had only been partly deciphered when the Japanese attacked that town too. In the meantime the opportunity that might have been taken to transfer the remaining civilians by a freighter then in the harbour had been lost. Even as late as the 22nd more passengers might have been transferred by yet another available ship if any clear directions had been received. The most charitable view, namely that Canberra was out of touch with what was happening in New Guinea, is itself a criticism only less damning than the alternative view that Canberra did know but did not care enough.

In facing the air raids and resisting the landings the Australians, against hopeless odds, fought well. After the destruction and death of the attack,

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[5] H. H. Page, DSO, MC. (1st AIF: Maj 25 Bn.) Government Secretary NG 1923-42, A/Administrator 1941-42. B. Grafton, NSW, 8 Aug 1888. Lost in sinking of *Montevideo Maru*, 1 Jul 1942. (He was a brother of Sir Earle Page.)

came atrocities committed on the unarmed or disarmed captives. In the escape of survivors, both soldiers and civilians, there were suffering, endurance, dangers and adventures that should make a nation's legends for years. The mass of the Australian population was unaware of them at the time and has only partly heard of them since. Government policy in the ensuing weeks was to water down the news of disasters lest Australians should get scared.

The first air raids on the New Guinea mainland began on 21st January, apparently to blanket the landings at Rabaul and Kavieng. Lae, Salamaua, Madang and Bulolo were the first to be struck. Various shifts and devices were used to aid the escape of the European population and, with the recognition of the emergency, civil administration ended and the military command took over.

On 8th March enemy troops arrived at Lae and Salamaua. The long and arduous campaign in New Guinea, which was to tie up the greater part of the Australian Army for much of the war and to cost the Japanese more than 100,000 dead, had begun.

In Papua the chief defensive preparations had been made at Port Moresby, where two 6-inch guns had been installed and about 1,250 troops posted in 1941. In May it had been created the headquarters of the 8th Military District. The evacuation of women and children had been completed by the end of the year and early in January 1942 the strength of the garrison rose to about 5,500, far outnumbering the civilians. Some strain between civil administration and military authority became apparent and confusion was heightened when the Army called into service the able-bodied civilians while the Administration was continuing to receive instructions from Canberra that civil administration and civil services were to be maintained. The confusion and ineptitude of officialdom in the Territories Branch in Canberra and the Department of the Army in Melbourne and lack of Ministerial direction added to the tension between soldier and civilian in the Territory. This sorry tale of misgovernment was punctuated with bombs in enemy raids on Port Moresby on 3rd and 5th February. The sad news of Rabaul had been trickling through. Lawlessness and looting in Port Moresby and desertions by the police resulted from the raids and were even more damaging than the bombs. The Government in Canberra seemed to be slow to grasp what had happened and was happening, and their messages to Port Moresby were unrealistic and imprecise, but a decision for the "temporary" cessation of civil administration in Papua was made on the 6th and in the subsequent days the Territories Branch got busy on the regulations, which, when eventually published on 12th February, led the way to the assumption of control by the G.O.C. of the 8th Military District on or about 15th February, the exact nature of the action that suspended civil administration and the time when it was effective being a matter of legal argument.

All this was done apparently with very imperfect consideration in Canberra, or even in Port Moresby itself, as to what would happen and

how the necessary duties would be done when civil administration ceased. In particular, the lot of the large indigenous population and especially that part of it in close association with the life of the Europeans, seems to have been given little thought and no arrangements for continuity of the services performed on their behalf appear to have been made either in New Guinea or in Papua.

In February and March 1942 those who died and those fugitives who struggled desperately and hazardously to rejoin their own countrymen, creeping along the sea coast by night, toiling up mountains and through the jungle, had a double loneliness, remote from physical aid and protection and remote from the concern of their fellow countrymen. To them belongs the tribute due to those who suffered and those who dared, but to the Australian Government the blame for ignorance, ineptitude, and neglect of responsibility.

In 1939 the Northern Territory had a population (excluding aborigines) of 6,973, of whom about a third were located in the port and capital of Darwin. Cattle-raising, mining and pearling contributed to a production valued from £700,000 to £900,000 a year. Local revenues totalled less than £300,000 and the Commonwealth Government's annual expenditure on administration, the provision of services and works was over £1,300,000. Internal communications were poor. The population of the territory was isolated, scattered, neglected and shifting. In 1939, out of a total population of 6,973, 4,190 were recent arrivals, and during the year the territory had lost 2,912 by emigration. The territory was administered by an Administrator (C. L. A. Abbott[5]) stationed at Darwin and responsible to the Minister for the Interior.

The development of the territory had baffled all governments and been neglected by most, but from 1937 onwards Darwin began to take on a new importance both for defence and as the first port of entry for civil airlines from Europe. For both purposes new buildings and public works were undertaken but on the outbreak of war Darwin was still a little town of scattered iron-roof houses, lying back from a tidal bay, from one tip of which an L-shaped jetty protruded into the deep water. Oil tanks were on the shore near the base of the jetty and a modern aerodrome and an Air Force station a few miles inland. From 1938 the town had been defended by a small regular force known as the Darwin Mobile Force and a fort mounting four 6-inch guns. In the defence preparations of 1939, 1940 and 1941 Darwin was allotted a definite place as a naval station, a naval floating dock was installed there and additional oil tanks provided. The Air Force station was strengthened. All this planning, however, was on the assumption that Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines were intact and looked rather to facilitating the naval defence of the Indonesian chain of islands than to the resistance of any attack on the Australian mainland.

[5] Hon C. L. A. Abbott. (1st AIF: Lt 12 LH Regt.) MHR 1925-29 and 1931-37; Minister for Home Affairs 1928-29; Administrator, Northern Territory 1937-46. B. Sydney, 4 May 1886.

After Japan came into the war the pace quickened. The importance of Darwin increased to Australia and also to the Americans, as a staging point for aircraft, a refuelling station and a stores depot on a new route for air reinforcements for the Philippines and a base for their warships allotted to the ABDA area.

After discussion between the Governments concerned, Darwin was placed under General Wavell, as Supreme Commander in the ABDA Command, together with the whole of the area lying north-west of a line drawn from Onslow to the south-east corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the defence of this part of Australia became Wavell's responsibility. The logic of the arrangement was that Wavell was already responsible in the Timor Sea, and command of the Timor Sea depended on the defence of Darwin, and the defence of Darwin required the holding of the surrounding mainland. The 14,050 Australian troops and the two R.A.A.F. squadrons allocated to Darwin were placed under Wavell's command, on the understanding that none of these forces should be transferred from Australia without the consent of the Commonwealth. Australian warships had already been allotted to the ABDA Command.[6] Darwin constituted a sub-command of ABDA with effect from midnight on 7th-8th February 1942. It did not revert to the Australian command until 7th March.

Already, during December, most of the women and children had been evacuated from Darwin by sea—an operation for which plans had been made as early as June 1940—and by February there were about 2,500 civilians left.[7] Already, too, the whole course of life had been changed in Darwin with the encampment near the town of some thousands of troops, the coming and going of American shipping, including ships of war such as the cruisers *Houston* and *Boise*, the seaplane tender *Langley* and the submarine mother ship *Holland*. Some of the first American forces to arrive in Australia were sent to Darwin. Thus, even before the rest of Australia had fully awakened Darwin was engaged in war activities.

This transition to a warlike state had been difficult and was by no means complete when the fall of Singapore and the loss of Ambon suddenly brought the Japanese attack to the very edge of the town. Throughout the whole period Darwin had been a cause of annoyance and a recognised point of weakness in the work of the defence authorities. Conditions there had caused concern in the second half of 1940, when industrial difficulties

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[6] Advisory War Council Minute 713 and War Cabinet Minute 1771 of 26 Jan 1942.

[7] According to ARP records the following numbers left by ship:

19 Dec	*Koolinda*	225	
20 Dec	*Zealandia*	530	
23 Dec	*President Grant*	222	
10 Jan	*Montoro*	187	
26 Jan	*Koolama*	173	
15 Feb	*Koolinda*	77	
			1,414

After the raid the following left by train and convoy to Alice Springs:

19 Feb	237	
20 Feb	388	
21 Feb	196	
22 Feb	132	
23 Feb	72	
		1,025

In addition south-bound planes carried their quota which up to 19th February was 380. The total evacuated up to 13th July was 4,274.

inherent in the local conditions were added to by the deliberate activities of Communists, who were then working against the Allied war effort and found Darwin a profitable field. An investigating officer of the Board of Business Administration, who tried to discover the local causes of the difficulties in December 1940, found lack of coordination between Government departments, bad facilities on the harbour and railways, dishonesty among wharf and railway workers, industrial troubles, shortage of labour, a low output due to the climate, procrastination by the civil authorities and "general malaise, lassitude and discontent". War emergencies had increased the inward freight to the port by 500 per cent but ships were being delayed owing to irregular service and slow handling on the wharves. The Board of Business Administration and the Defence Committee recommended that, while the local government of Darwin remained under the Administrator, a suitable area should be declared a defence area, within which all transport, building and works pertaining to defence should be under the complete control of the defence authorities, and that works and labour units should be enlisted and placed under military control. The Menzies Government was plain scared of the effect such action would have in the Labour movement throughout Australia and on 5th March 1941 deferred the consideration of the recommendation.[8] Industrial hold-ups at Darwin occurred throughout 1941. In the growing urgency of defence demands towards the end of the year and in January 1942, the labour troubles on the Darwin wharves caused serious concern.[9] The United States general, Brigadier-General Barnes, complained bluntly to the Advisory War Council and asked for military labour. The Government's policy, however, was not to allow any servicemen to be used on the wharves until all local civilian labour had been absorbed. The Americans complained that the *Holbrook*, with American artillery equipment on board, had waited at Darwin for three weeks before the equipment could be taken off. Two other ships for Darwin had to be held up at Townsville because the berths at Darwin were not being cleared. Under the importunity of Barnes, Curtin agreed on 12th January to have immediate inquiries made.[1] After a ministerial visit from Ward to confer with the union, some additional wharf labour was flown into Darwin. The low output of labour and the faults in the construction of the harbour were not the only troubles, however, for the management of the port was also considered to be defective. Accordingly, on 7th February, the Prime Minister appointed a Port Superintendent as the sole authority to direct the whole activities of the Darwin waterfront in regard to the discharge and distribution of cargo.[2]

The four years of defence preparations and the belated attempts to deal with unsatisfactory conditions in the harbour had not been good enough, however, and on 19th February Darwin was still weakly defended, and the harbour was dangerously congested.

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[8] War Cabinet Agendum 101/1941.

[9] L. J. McPhillips was secretary of the North Australian Workers' Union from 10th June 1940 to the end of November 1941 when his place was taken by M. P. Ryan.

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 669, 12 Jan 1942.

[2] War Cabinet Minute 1877, 10 Feb 1942; Agendum 84/1942.

For some days there had been activities which might have been read as a warning of attack. On the 15th a convoy carrying reinforcements to Timor, escorted by *Houston*, *Peary*, *Warrego* and *Swan*, had experienced recurrent attacks from Japanese aircraft and been ordered back to Darwin, arriving on the afternoon of the 18th. Japanese aircraft had been reported over Darwin on the 16th and over Bathurst Island on the 18th.

At 9.35 a.m. on the 19th a missionary reported from Bathurst Island by radio telephone that a large number of aircraft had passed overhead at a great height towards Darwin. The missionary himself had received the news from a native boy, whose keen eyes and ears had detected the attackers, but not having seen them himself the message was given in general terms. Air Force Operations Control Room in Darwin lost about twenty minutes before giving the alarm, for the Operations Room Controller assumed too readily at first that this report referred to returning American aircraft. Consequently the attack came on the town with a public warning of only a minute or less.

The first raid began just before 10 a.m. Estimates of the strength of the enemy force varied. A Navy Intelligence report of the 24th stated that there were 54 single-engined dive bombers, 18 Zero fighters and 27 twin-engined heavy bombers; the Civil Administrator's report of 27th February quoted information to the effect that the total was 93 aircraft, while the Lowe[3] report, issued after a subsequent investigation, referred to 27 heavy bombers and not more than 50 dive bombers and fighters.[4] After circling the town, the high level bombers came in from the south-east at an altitude of about 14,000 feet and dropped bombs in pattern over the harbour. After another circuit they returned and dropped bombs in pattern over the town. Watchers saw the falling bombs, catching the light, as silver streaks, like great raindrops coming down the sky. Then came the dive bombers, escorted by fighters, to attack the shipping in the harbour. Circling in and out, bombing and machine-gunning, they also attacked the R.A.A.F. aerodrome and civil aerodrome and the hospital at Berrima, nine miles from the town.

The American Kittyhawks made desperate attempts to engage the enemy but, for lack of warning, were unable to make height before they were shot down. The small batteries of anti-aircraft guns blazed away but at that time Darwin had only 18 guns in operation—two 3-inch and the rest 3.7-inch. The ships in the harbour defended themselves with whatever they had and the American destroyer *Peary* went down firing to the last.

Then, after about 40 minutes of noise, fury and destruction, silence came. The attackers had gone. The all-clear sounded. Gun crews rested. Rescue work started. Men came out into the open. Suddenly there was

[3] Hon Sir Charles Lowe, KCMG. Justice of Supreme Court of Victoria 1927-64; Chancellor, University of Melbourne 1941-54. B. Panmure, Vic, 4 Oct 1880. Died 20 Mar 1969.

[4] According to the Japanese the number of aircraft employed in this first attack far exceeds the estimates of the Australian observers. They state the total figure as 188 aircraft (36 fighters, 71 carrier bombers and 81 carrier attack planes). See "Invasion of the Dutch East Indies", a Japanese account in ATIS translation, dated 14 May 1948, and Douglas Lockwood, *Australia's Pearl Harbour* (1966), p. 218. The confirmatory figures provided by Lockwood, who describes the attacks on Darwin in close detail, were given to him by the Deputy Director of the Japanese Naval War History.

a roar, flames shot up from the harbour, and a great mushroom of smoke rose 400 feet high where the *Neptuna*, loaded with explosives, had blown up at the wharf.

There was an hour's relief. In the harbour region rescue boats were coming and going and the wounded were being collected on the hospital ship *Manunda*, itself damaged by a direct hit, and in the *Platypus*, which was more or less intact but immobilised. The operating theatre was busy. On shore civilian wounded were thronging the hospital, where a calm staff were trying to restore order, for eight bombs landing in the grounds had wrecked part of the building with blast and hurled huge boulders through the roof. From a bomb shelter near the mangled Post Office the bodies of nine of the townsfolk were recovered. From under Government House office, also smashed by a direct hit, the Administrator emerged. One of his group, an aboriginal maid, had been killed and another was pinned under fallen masonry.

A second raid began about 11.45 a.m. Again there was conflict of evidence regarding the strength of the attacking force. It seems definite, however, that the attack was carried out by 54 land-based bombers. They came in two formations, each of 27 bombers, at great height, probably 18,000 feet, and concentrated on pattern bombing the R.A.A.F. aerodrome for about 20 or 25 minutes, dropping about 200 bombs, including anti-personnel bombs.

The attackers flew away. In the town the people again crawled from the slit trenches or the gutters where they had thrown themselves or from under the houses. They looked around again. Great craters were in the roadways and in vacant blocks; in the harbour they saw wrecked and smoking ships, twisted iron and shattered timbers, rescuers still recovering the dead and wounded bodies lying in the roots of the mangroves. The wharf was smashed and unusable. The warships were damaged or had been dispersed. Rumours came from the aerodrome of shattered hangars, ammunition dumps destroyed, aircraft left in tatters. The troops at Larrakeyah had been dispersed under orders. There was death, injury and destruction in every corner and the smoke of desolation drifting over all. Someone started to talk about the next raid—or an invasion. Someone said, "I'm going to clear out." Someone said, "So and so has gone already."

First-hand accounts from responsible officers made immediately after the event all agree that during the raids the townspeople stood up to the ordeal remarkably well and there was little sign of panic. Very soon after the raids ceased, however, a rush out of town started. During the afternoon the townsfolk streamed southwards in all imaginable kinds of conveyances, making for Adelaide River and the train to take them south. In some cases persons who had calmly begun the midday meal, prepared after the second raid had ceased, became aware of the exodus and rose, leaving the meal unfinished, to get together their portable goods and run. Shops and business premises were closed. Chinatown was deserted. There was confusion of counsel, and unauthorised servicemen and some A.R.P.

officials kept advising civilians to get out of town. That night looting began in the town, mostly attributed to servicemen. An officer and a non-commissioned officer of the Provost Corps, responsible for maintaining discipline, had themselves to be arrested.[4]

In the succeeding days some of the official services were also transferred to Katherine on the orders of the Administrator, although senior officials and the Administrator were active in Darwin in maintaining light and water and restoring the life of the town. The recovery from the raid was considerably hampered by lack of labour and by the complete absence of any of the leaders of the North Australian Workers' Union through whom arrangements for the return of labour might have been facilitated.

The panic in the town had an unexpected parallel at the Air Force station, where it appeared that after the heavy second raid directed solely against them, the servicemen deserted their station in great numbers. The run started, it would appear, when a direction was given that the men should gather to be fed at a point half a mile down the road and half a mile into the bush. The order was distorted in repetition and whether under the mistaken belief that they were ordered to take to the bush or whether, once in the bush they preferred it to the bomb-shattered station, the fact is that for a time the air station was practically deserted. As late as three days after the raid, when men had started to straggle back, there were still 278 missing. Where leadership existed the men responded well. Men in the equipment branch who left the station proceeded south only long enough to realise that there was no plan; they returned and were directed to the civil aerodrome where the air force was operating normally. And beyond the "deserted" R.A.A.F. station and aerodrome there were at least some groups of men continuously under discipline of their N.C.O's.

The casualties in the two raids on Darwin on 19th February, according to the records of the Army, Navy and R.A.A.F. were 195 killed and 443 wounded. The Lowe report gave 243 killed and approximately 350 wounded. The chief discrepancy was between a total of 40 civilians killed

[4] Enemy attacks or evacuation of most centres, and particularly in Port Moresby and Darwin, were followed by looting of damaged premises or abandoned and unoccupied property. An inter-departmental committee, consisting of Messrs A. C. Joyce (Treasury), J. G. B. Castieau (Attorney-General's Department) and A. E. Warburton (War Damage Commission), was set up to examine the liability to the Commonwealth for losses. This committee divided "looting" into (a) irregular impressment of goods by members of the Forces acting under instructions, sometimes precise and sometimes general; (b) stealing, rioting or acts of violence by members of forces; (c) looting by civilians. It found that "irregular impressment" was a feature of the events which occurred at Darwin and Port Moresby in the period immediately following the first raids. The Army took over goods because (a) the services normally used such items, (b) some of the goods, such as foodstuffs, would have deteriorated if not used, and (c) at a time when every possible saving in transport had to be made, the services were able to use the local goods as substitutes for goods and materials which otherwise would have been obtained from the south. The Committee reported that the Army was taking "energetic action" to deal with claims arising in connection with this irregular impressment.

For the rest, the Committee reached the view that the Commonwealth had neither legal nor moral responsibility to make good losses suffered. As far as stealing and rioting by members of the services were concerned, the relationship between the Commonwealth and a member of the forces was similar to the relationship between master and servant and the master could not, except in pursuance of some statutory provision, be held responsible for the criminal acts of his servants. It was also argued that members of the forces were also subject to civil laws and the maintenance of law and order was the responsibility of the civil authorities. The looting in Darwin was done partly by members of the forces, partly by merchant seamen, and partly by civilians and it was impossible to tell exactly how much was due to each of these types. If, therefore, the Commonwealth were to accept any liability for looting by members of the forces it would inevitably be forced to accept responsibility for looting by civilians. The War Cabinet, having considered the Committee's report, decided that no liability should be accepted by the Commonwealth for looting by members of the forces. (War Cabinet Minute 2722, 6 Apr 1942.)

according to the service reports and 53 according to the Lowe report; and between a total of 143 killed on naval and merchant vessels according to the service reports and a total of 175 given for the whole group in the Lowe report. The compilers of the service reports concede that, as the Lowe report was compiled some time after the raid, it might include among the killed some of those who had died from wounds.[5] The vast majority of deaths, including civilians, occurred in the harbour and on the wharf. The official reports of losses included six ships (including one American) set on fire and sunk, including one that blew up, two other ships sunk by enemy fire, three beached and ten (including two American) damaged; two Catalina flying boats destroyed in the harbour, and one other and two American vessels destroyed in adjacent waters. On land, the post office, police station, the barracks, cable office and Government buildings were destroyed and the civil hospital damaged. At the R.A.A.F. station six Australian aircraft were destroyed on the ground and two damaged, and eight American Kittyhawks were destroyed in the air and two on the ground and one other aircraft was destroyed on the ground and one damaged in the air. Three American transport planes were also destroyed. Buildings were wrecked. There was only slight damage to the oil tanks.

The official announcement made to the Australian people on 20th February was that the total casualties were 17 killed and 24 wounded, several ships had been hit and damage done to wharves and buildings and some of our aircraft damaged on the ground. Gradually rumours that the losses were greater, that the town had been caught napping and that there had been panic began to percolate southwards. The official reports from the services and from the Administrator within a few days of the raid indicated cause for concern. At a time when Ministers thought that southern towns, too, might have to sustain air raids or invasion it was probably disconcerting to receive a report from the Administrator that labour had fled when it was most needed, that looting had started and that the Provost Corps was undisciplined, and to have blunt statements from service reports that appeared to support these statements. On 3rd March a Commission of Inquiry was appointed under National Security Regulations to inquire into the circumstances of the raid. The Commissioner, Mr Justice Lowe, presented a first report on 27th March, and a second report on 9th April.[6]

On 23rd February, the powers of the civil administration in that part of the Northern Territory north of Birdum were vested in the Military Commandant, and the administration of the southern part of the Territory was centred in Alice Springs.

In the light of after-events it is now reasonably clear that the Japanese attack on Darwin—the heaviest ever launched on the Australian mainland

[5] An attempted reconciliation of the figures by breaking them down into separate ships and the various services (including a group for civilians) was carried out by the War History Branch. This reduced the discrepancy between the Lowe Report and other estimates to approximately 5.

[6] For detailed accounts of the raid from the service point of view see D. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*, G. Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1939–42* (1957), and D. Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force, 1939-42*. See also Appendix 6, "A Note on Sources of Information on the Bombing of Darwin."

—was not directed primarily against Australian defences but was necessitated by the fact that Japan was about to attack Timor and saw the need, after reconnaissance, first to smash the harbour and the aerodrome in Darwin from where alone reinforcements might be sailed or flown or a counter-attack directed. At the time, however, the thought of invasion was in the air and the attack on Darwin was seen by many in authority as the possible forerunner of heavier onslaughts there or elsewhere on the Australian coast. That thought of invasion, combined with the general defencelessness of the north and the foolish harping on the theme of evacuation which had been going on throughout Australia for months, was probably a more direct cause of the panic that seized Darwin after the raids than any defects peculiar to that one day or that group of people.

The next heavy raid fell on Broome, on the north-west coast. Broome, a pearling town with three or four cattle stations in the vicinity, was composed of rather less than 200 dwellings strewn around the wide opalescent arc of Roebuck Bay. Its normal pre-war population was four or five hundred Europeans and perhaps a thousand coloured folk. It had no fixed defences. In July 1940 some of its citizens, more acutely aware of danger than southern authorities, had formed themselves into a "Broome Guard" under a pearler and Gallipoli veteran, Captain Macnee,[7] and this guard armed with 100 rifles later became part of the Volunteer Defence Corps. They voluntarily mounted guards on the wireless station and the jetty. The only military role of the town was that of an advanced refuelling station for the R.A.A.F. and for that purpose a handful of air force men had been stationed there.

During February, however, it became increasingly active, first with the arrival of a small group of the United States Army Air Corps, mainly for the development of a transport route, then with the setting up of a local staff of Qantas Empire Airways to run a shuttle service to and from Singapore or Java and Australia, and increasingly throughout the period with the flow of refugees or persons being officially evacuated from Malaya and Java. As previously related, it had been brought under Wavell's command.

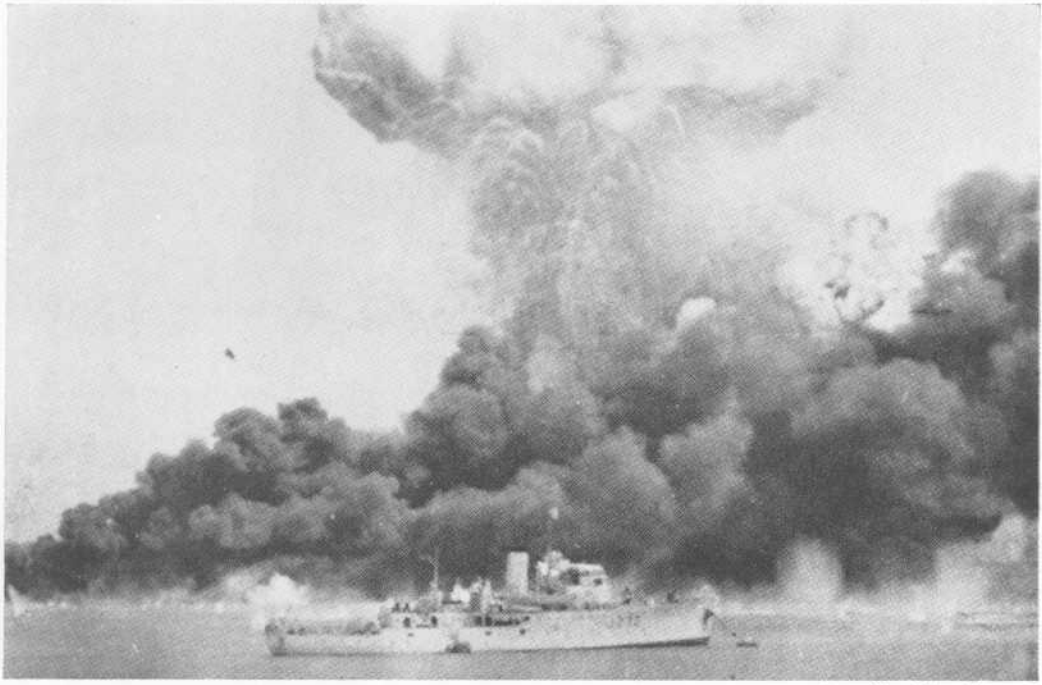
With the frequent heavy concentration of aircraft, both military and civil, on the aerodrome and in the bay, it became obvious that a Japanese air attack might be expected, and Macnee and the chairman of the local Road Board took action on 21st February to evacuate women and children by the coastal steamer *Koolinda*. Their action was supported by an order issued at their prompting by the G.O.C. Western Command, Major-General Plant,[8] and later confirmed by War Cabinet.[9] Sixty-three women and sixty children were packed on board and sailed for safety just in time. A few remaining women were taken out by American aircraft a few days later.

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[7] Capt H. M. Macnee, MC, DCM. (1st AIF: 10th LH Regt.) Pearler; of Broome, WA; b. Fitzroy, Vic, 14 Feb 1887. Died 28 Oct 1960.

[8] Maj-Gen E. C. P. Plant, CB, DSO, OBE. Comd 24 Bde 1940-41, Rear Echelon AIF ME and 25 Bde 1941, NSW L of C Area 1943-46. Regular soldier; b. Charters Towers, Qld, 23 Apr 1890. Died 17 May 1950.

[9] War Cabinet Minute 1916, 23 Feb 1942.



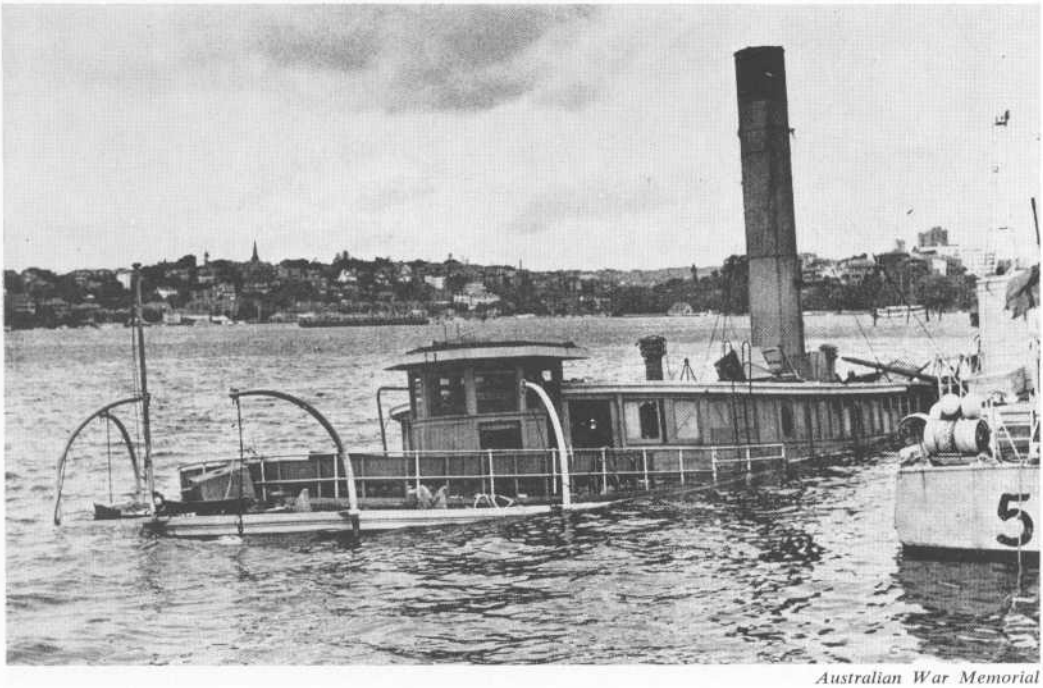
Australian War Memorial

Darwin: Smoke rising from oil tanks hit during the first Japanese attack on the Australian mainland on 19th February 1942. H.M.A.S. *Deloraine*, which escaped unscathed, is seen in the foreground. Japanese land and carrier based aircraft, in two separate attacks, sank eight ships in the harbour and caused widespread damage and confusion. About 250 people were killed and more than 300 wounded.



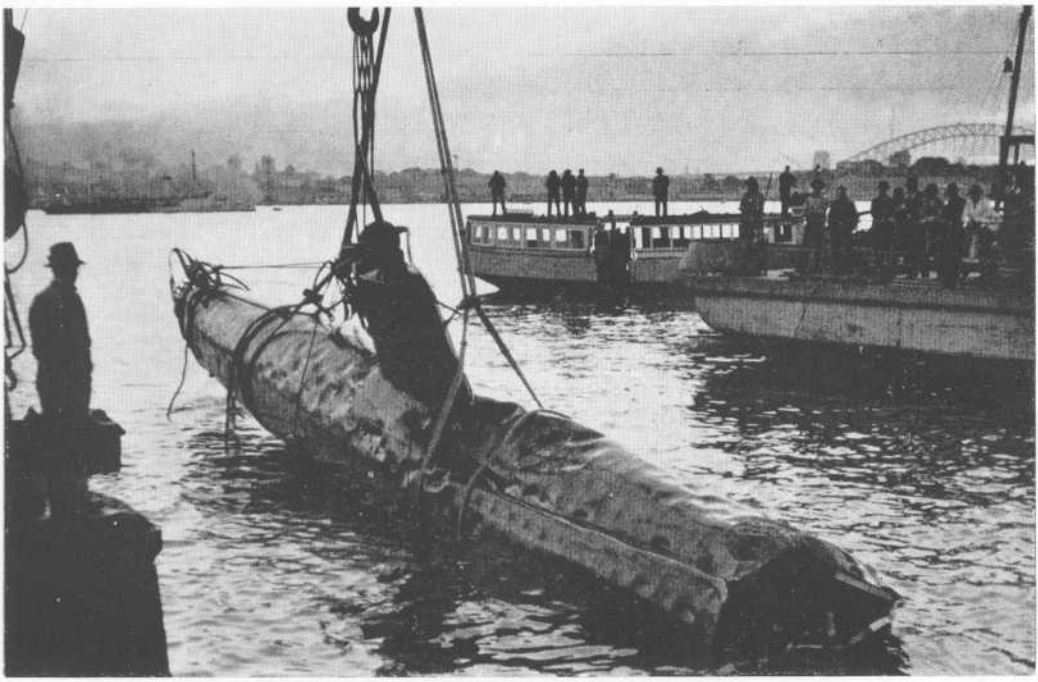
Australian War Memorial

Broome airfield after the Japanese air raid on 3rd March 1942. Eight aircraft were destroyed on the aerodrome and 16 flying boats in the bay. About 70 people were killed, including a number of women and children who were refugees from the Netherlands Indies.



Australian War Memorial

H.M.A.S. *Kuttabul* after the Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour on the night of 31st May-1st June 1942. Nineteen naval ratings were lost when a torpedo from one of the three midget submarines struck the harbour bed beneath *Kuttabul* and exploded.



Australian War Memorial

Part of one of the midget submarines being brought to the surface the day after the raid.

During the last fortnight of February the stream of refugees increased, chiefly Americans and Dutch, both civilians and servicemen, in both civil craft and army machines. An official of the Broome Road Board, speaking from his own observation and not from any records, stated that during this fortnight seven to eight thousand people passed through the town southward, aircraft arriving both night and day. Hotels were crowded, the local school was turned into a mess-room, private homes took in strangers and fed them and, partly because of lack of accommodation and partly because of the difficulties in landing caused by 24-foot tides, passengers on flying boats often slept and fed on board their aircraft in the bay during their overnight stop. On the night of 2nd March there were sixteen flying boats anchored in the bay, mostly Dutch Dorniers. A Japanese reconnaissance aircraft had been over the town during the afternoon. If by no other means, the Japanese must have become aware of the increasing activity on this route by listening to the radio traffic.

About 9.20 on the morning of the 3rd Japanese planes appeared at the entrance to the bay, flying low. It is difficult to find agreement among eye-witnesses as to the time when they came or how many of them there were. Probably nine Zeros took part, three of them remaining aloft to give cover. There is no doubt about what they did. Three of them flew again and again over the bay and machine-gunned the moored flying boats until all were destroyed. Some of these aircraft were fully loaded with passengers ready to take off but the pilots were still in the town awaiting instructions. Three other Japanese planes flew over the aerodrome and destroyed all the planes on the ground, including two Flying Fortresses and two American Liberators, one of which was shot down as it attempted to take off with 30 troops on board. A Dornier which had taken off about 10 minutes before the raid started was chased and brought down. The raid lasted only 15 minutes.

There was no possibility of defence. A number of posts had been prepared by the Americans but there were no guns in them. One of the Dutchmen at the aerodrome braced a machine-gun against a doorpost and fired at the attackers. Some say that he shot down a Zero, but this is not officially confirmed.

The raiders made no attempt to attack the town or the jetty, where there were stocks of oil and where a number of passengers had been waiting to go aboard the flying boats until the commencement of the raid scattered them ashore. The only Allied aircraft to escape from the raid was a small seaplane which had been flown off the United States cruiser *Houston* before its loss in the Java Sea Battle and was lying alongside the jetty.

The men, women and children on the flying boats who had not been killed or mortally wounded in the first attack jumped into the bullet-ripped waters of the bay, supporting each other, struggling for safety. Some were shot as they struggled, not by being picked out but by reason of the fury of the attack on the remaining vessels. Courage of a high order was shown in the midst of the raid by civilians in a fuelling boat and another civilian

in a launch, rescuing the victims from the water, while the bullets were still flying.[1]

The number of aircraft lost was known definitely—16 in the bay and 8 on land—but the casualties could only be guessed at for there was no means of making an exact check of who was missing among the refugees.[2] The official estimate was about 70 killed, including all but one of those on the American Liberator which had been shot down into the sea. The wounded were never finally assessed, but one early estimate was 28.

After the raid there was panic among a section of the townspeople. They could scarcely be blamed as the highest ranking officer in the town, an American lieut-colonel, was publicly advising them to get out before the Japanese landed. Later in the day the same officer who, judging from a report he furnished to Intelligence on his own arrival in Melbourne two days later, was a rather melodramatic type, wanted to issue an order that the town be evacuated and demolition carried out on the aerodrome. He reached this decision after a report of a smudge of smoke out at sea had led to a rumour that a "Nip cruiser" was moving in. The R.A.A.F., 12 in number, was ordered to go but decided to stay after protests from the remaining townsfolk. The Americans, about 100 strong, all flew out to fight another day.

Under such encouragement, a number of the civilians formed what they termed a "land convoy" and set out purposefully for the south only to be held up by rain and impassable roads at Anna Plains. Not all went. Some of the officials stayed, as well as a few civilians. The Post Office kept working. An air force doctor who had arrived on the day of the raid set the deserted hospital to rights. The evacuation of the United States troops was completed on the evening of the 6th. With its departure, the total defences of the town consisted of 6 rifles and about 40 boxes of ammunition in the hands of the air force and a few rifles and 5,000 rounds with 30 or 40 men of the V.D.C.[3]

In the course of a few days some of those civilians who had left returned, having found roads impassable and the bush inhospitable. Although there were some men to work the wharves they would only work at nights and took to the bush during the earlier part of the day, acting on the theory that, as the Japanese had to fly out and back, they would only make their raids in the mornings. More and more of those who had been blocked in their attempt to go south by road returned to the town and set up a demand for immediate evacuation. Captain Macnee, backed by the senior officer of the R.A.A.F., took so serious a view that he sent a signal south asking for martial law to be proclaimed and for reinforcements to be sent at once. They had a problem on their hands too, of steamers due to arrive with petrol and foodstuffs to be unloaded. In a few days, however, the local

[1] For gallant work during the raid Captain L. J. Brain of Qantas Empire Airways (he was on the R.A.A.F. Reserve and was to become a Wing Commander in 1944) received "official commendation", and Captain Harold Mathieson of the schooner *Nicol Bay* received a gold medal and citation from the Dutch Government.

[2] Twenty-nine unidentified victims of the raid are buried in the Broome war cemetery.

[3] Signal to the Air Board from Broome, 7 Mar 1942.

Road Board began to organise an Evacuation Committee which gave the discontented some prospect of their orderly removal from the town; essential services were restored; and most of those whom a local officer described as "ill, aged and wilful" were transferred to Port Hedland. There was further consternation when it was proposed to withdraw the R.A.A.F. medical officer, and a meeting of some citizens on the 16th decided that unless protective forces and a doctor were forthcoming immediately an organised evacuation of the town and district would be ordered. Throughout it all the feeling of isolation and neglect was added to, as the exchanges of messages reveal, by the apparent inactivity of the State Government in matters under its concern, and the inattentiveness of the Federal Government who had so many other disasters on their mind.

On 20th March Broome had its second raid, when bombs were dropped on the runway at the aerodrome, a civil aircraft was burnt out, and one man—a Malay—was killed.

The objectives of the raid on Wyndham which took place simultaneously with the raid on Broome on 3rd March were aircraft on the aerodrome and petrol dumps. Wyndham, a town of only some 30 or 40 houses, was remarkable chiefly for its meatworks, which were operated only in the dry season and were not working at the time of the raid. The aerodrome, some miles from the town, had been used by the R.A.A.F. as an advanced fuelling station. There were no local defences except a squad of 30 members of the local V.D.C. The eight enemy raiders machine-gunned and set alight the petrol dump and destroyed a Dragon aircraft on the ground. There were no casualties.

On 20th March, Derby, a cattle port about 90 miles north of Broome, was raided in similar fashion without damage or casualties, and on the 23rd the Wyndham aerodrome was bombed and pitted with about 30 craters.

During this period, up to the first week of April, Darwin had sustained 11 more raids, none on so grand a scale as the first but most of them causing damage. In the third raid on 4th March a Hudson was destroyed as it was about to take off but there were no casualties. In the fourth raid on the 16th two airmen were killed and nine others wounded in a direct hit on aerodrome buildings. In the fifth on 19th March, two were killed and seven wounded and damage was done to houses in the town and to naval headquarters. The sixth, on 22nd March was harmless, but the eleventh, on 2nd April caused damage to the oil tanks and to houses, while in the twelfth, on 4th April, when the civil aerodrome was strafed, a civilian was killed and two servicemen wounded. After a raid on the R.A.A.F. aerodrome on the 5th, causing craters on the runway, there was quietness for three weeks.

The people around the northern and north-western coasts were experiencing what had been experienced by the small, isolated and inadequately defended settlements of Rabaul, Lae and Salamaua, which had already been occupied by the Japanese and by the people of Port Moresby, under constant raids and in prospect of early and certain defeat by an invader

unless strong reinforcements came. Through March there was no sign of reinforcement of the west coast but only a dwindling stream of refugees from the horrors of the Malayan and Indonesian debacle, sometimes on the verge of hysteria, sometimes staggering the beholder by the sheer impudence against fate with which they had piloted their resurrected aircraft or steered their crazy leaky sampans and junks to the Australian coast. Those who stayed in Darwin, Wyndham, Derby, Broome and Hedland saw more of war than most Australian citizens. Those little bands of V.D.C. men at Wyndham and at Broome, armed with a few rifles, were a resolute patch of local patriotism against the dun background of greater numbers who, not knowing how to serve, had run.

In these corners of the continent, during February and March, when the peril seemed greatest, the declared intention by the Curtin Government that the whole of Australia should be held and that the Japanese should be resisted wherever they landed must have surely seemed less like a policy than a piece of oratory. These isolated outposts knew that, just as Britain had been unable to hold the remote parts of her Empire, so the Commonwealth of Australia would be unable to hold the outlying parts of its domain and, in fact, had scarcely any of the means to do so. Even when, during subsequent months, both the Northern Territory and Western Australia were reassured by the transfer of more troops to them there was one corner—the East and West Kimberley divisions of Western Australia—which remained outside the perimeter of military planning.

By the first week in April, however, the tension throughout Australia began to ease. Six weeks had passed since the fall of Singapore. The later Japanese raids had shown less and less of the character of preparation for an immediate invasion. Moreover MacArthur had come. Some of the A.I.F. had returned. The Americans were here. We would now fight back with a chance of winning. Canberra grew less frightened; the outlying parts of the continent more hopeful.

CHAPTER 3

HIGHER POLICY IN THE PACIFIC, APRIL 1942-JUNE 1943

1—A TIME OF DECISION

THE first urgent measures having been taken to resist attack, it became the duty of the Australian Government to look at the war situation as a whole to find out more exactly the needs and the opportunities and, weighing one against the other, to decide where and in what manner Australia could best play her part as an ally to hold off the enemy and to work towards final victory. Perhaps, too, a chance might be found of bringing her views to bear on inter-Allied councils, so that not only the strength of Australia but the combined resources of the United Nations would be applied in the right place at the right time. These decisions of higher policy would thus fix the pattern of the Australian war effort and perhaps help to shape the grand strategy of the Allies.

For sixteen months, from April 1942 onwards, the chief interest of the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet was with higher policy. Simultaneously, they and their colleagues on the Production Executive were applying the new controls and directing the new agencies by which the resources of the nation were being mobilised and were dealing with the domestic problems arising from the urgent political and social readjustments forced on the nation by danger. These contemporaneous activities are recounted in the two succeeding chapters.

At the end of the period under review the Prime Minister and his party claimed in effect that the decisions on higher policy which had been taken had saved Australia. Because of the boldness of the claim these decisions call for close and detailed examination, for, if the claim were well-founded, here is the turning point in the story of Australia's survival. Furthermore, these decisions had far-reaching consequences in shaping Australia's role among the combatants, in forming the reputation of Australia as an ally, and in creating most of the problems with which the Australian Government had to wrestle during the final two years of the war.

The successive decisions have necessarily to be related to the changing fortunes of war. In April 1942 the Japanese forces had been everywhere successful, and the war against Germany was everywhere hazardous—in Russia, North Africa and the Atlantic. By June 1943 Japan had suffered defeats by land and sea and in the air and the forces marshalled against her had been more than doubled; Russia had taken the offensive against Germany; the enemy had been cleared from North Africa, mastery of the air and sea had been regained in the Mediterranean and preparations were being made for the Sicilian invasion; and the weight of bombing attacks on northern Germany had increased enormously. The mounting totals of Allied war production and mastery in the north Atlantic gave confidence

that Germany and Japan must ultimately be defeated. Throughout the whole period, however, there had been ups and downs, reverses as well as victories, and hopes and fears, good news and bad. Decisions were taken sometimes when the whole scene was darkened by the report of a loss and sometimes when it was lightened by the report of a gain. In recording the Australian decisions we have to try to recall the time and circumstances in which each was made. In evaluating them we will have to ask whether the Government saw clearly and accurately what was happening and whether its decisions were the best response to the facts known to the Government at the time.

In the successive Australian decisions it will be noticed that the constant theme was a claim for reinforcements for the South-West Pacific Area and an insistence that more attention should be given to the whole Pacific theatre. Sometimes this theme was supported by representations of the grave danger from Japan and the folly of underestimating the enemy; sometimes by representations that an opportunity for an offensive was being lost.

Australia became the most importunate and assiduous advocate of greater activity in the Pacific theatre. Australia took decisions in matters wholly within her control to concentrate nearly all her energies and resources in the war in the Pacific.

In tracing the course of events, and testing the wisdom of Australian action, certain circumstances have to be borne in mind. Australia was an ally with other nations in the war against Japan and had committed her forces to a Supreme Commander who was subject to the strategical direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington—the American Chiefs of Staff.[1] Furthermore, she depended very largely on her Allies for supplies of aircraft and tanks and for naval defence and, beyond a limit of about 10 divisions, for any major concentration of forces. To that extent Australia's ability to decide matters for herself was narrowly limited. The only way was to persuade the Allies to take action. In the Australian attempts to do this two factors are clearly apparent. One was that the Australian Government, making common cause with MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the South-West Pacific Area, became very much subject to his ideas and the sponsor of his claims. The other was the fact that the Australian Government became subject to the machinery for Allied cooperation which had been devised. Although at the outset the Australian Government might have flattered itself that it was among those powers who were making the machinery run, in practical experience Ministers found that the machinery was not a means by which they participated in the higher direction of the war but simply an additional means by which they could make their opinions known. The Joint Chiefs of Staff at Washington had the overall direction of the war in the Pacific

[1] The Combined Chiefs of Staff, who comprised the American Chiefs of Staff plus representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff exercised "general jurisdiction over grand strategic policy", including allocation of forces and materials. The Joint Chiefs of Staff exercised jurisdiction over "all matters pertaining to operational strategy" in the Pacific theatres.

and it is difficult to find any convincing example of their decisions being influenced by any Australian representation.

Roosevelt and Churchill and the Combined Chiefs of Staff determined higher policy. The Australian Prime Minister used his privilege of placing his views directly before both leaders. He sometimes succeeded in obtaining minor modifications of decisions already taken and was able at all times to make them aware of the Australian view. It is difficult to find any evidence that the Australian views ever profoundly influenced what they did or diverted them from the grand strategy on which they had previously agreed. In such matters as the return of the 6th and 7th Divisions from South-East Asia and later from Ceylon and the return of the 9th Division from the Middle East, on which Australia had the final right to speak, the will of Australia prevailed. On other matters, by reason of Australia's importunity, an occasional concession was made.

The Pacific War Council in Washington, which Australia had hoped would turn into a council of the nations at which major decisions would be shaped, turned into a regular meeting at which the President or his deputy told the representatives of other nations in a friendly way how things were going, comments were listened to politely and questions were answered as fully as was thought proper by the President.

The Australian Government was unaware of the course of a great deal of the high-level planning between Roosevelt and Churchill or by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, or even by United States service commanders, until after the consummation of that planning had made it public. The decision reached at the Washington talks between Roosevelt and Churchill in late December, or early January 1942, to concentrate first on the war effort against Germany and to fight a holding war in the Pacific, was not communicated to Australia until the following May. Australia argued about the return of the 9th Division from the Middle East in ignorance of the plans being made for the Allied landing in North Africa on 7th and 8th November 1942—plans which required a convoy of over 500 ships. The Australian Government pressed claims for naval reinforcement of the South-West Pacific Area at a time when, unknown to them, the United States Navy was making preparations elsewhere. They offered contributions on the grand strategy of the Pacific when these matters were already being decided at the Casablanca Conference. Sometimes the unfriendly critic might think that the Australian Government was doing less than its duty as an ally by insisting too strongly on its own point of view, but in most cases the spirit of alliance had already been damaged in the lack of frankness and the absence of consultation by Roosevelt and Churchill with the less powerful nations like Australia which were expected to commit their strength to the common fight.

A further point to be noticed in tracing the course of Australian higher policy is that at all times the United Kingdom, United States and Australian Governments saw the war against Japan from three different standpoints. Australia was a comparatively weak nation with the Japanese forces near her doorstep. The United States was a powerful nation carrying heavy

commitments to the war in Europe as well as the war in the Far East and, although charged with the "executive responsibility" for conducting the war in the Pacific, she saw that responsibility extending from Alaska to New Zealand, and embracing China and her own west coast as well as the South-West Pacific. The United Kingdom, with a different enemy on her doorstep, was maintaining steady air raids on Germany, conducting an incessant battle in the north Atlantic and facing desperate conditions in the Mediterranean and, although charged with the "executive responsibility" for the war against Japan in the Middle theatre, saw the most urgent side of that responsibility in the existing threats in Burma and India and the critical importance of keeping the Indian Ocean open to her transports to the Middle East and to her freighters from Australia and south-western Asia. None of the three was able to see the predominant anxieties of the others as sharply as each experienced its own.

At the beginning of April 1942, the Australian Government saw chiefly that Japanese forces were concentrating in the Bismarck Archipelago. The enemy was already established at Rabaul, Lae and Salamaua. Shipping was being assembled. It was believed that, having captured Java, Japan was now able to assemble a task force and launch an attack with at least three divisions at a point selected by herself. First Japan would occupy Port Moresby, or the southern Solomon Islands. Then the attack would come on north-eastern Australia. Alternatively, the enemy might first come down through the New Hebrides to New Caledonia and cut the lines of communication to Australia. As the days passed Australia found confirmation of her view in the repeated bombing of Port Moresby. In her view, the successful Allied air attack on Japanese shipping reported to have taken place on 10th March 1942 had prevented the Japanese advance from developing more rapidly, and the fact that the Allied aircraft had found such targets was in itself a further proof of Japanese intentions.[2]

The invasion of Australia was uppermost in Australian minds, no matter whether her leaders talked of defence or attack, but neither London nor Washington believed at any time that there was a serious danger of invasion of Australia. Contemporary documents give ample illustrations of the British and American viewpoint. The United Kingdom had cause for considerable anxiety in the Indian Ocean. On 5th April a large enemy force raided Colombo and in a subsequent encounter sank the heavy cruisers *Cornwall* and *Dorsetshire*. On the 9th they raided Trincomalee and that day the carrier *Hermes* and the Australian destroyer *Vampire* were sunk by dive bombers. At that time the Japanese fleet operating in the Indian Ocean was considered likely to be superior to the anticipated British strength for three months to come. In these circumstances the British policy was to build up the Eastern Fleet and to augment the shore-based air strength of India and Ceylon and in the meantime to evade a major encounter. At the close of the next critical three months they hoped that the Eastern Fleet would be able to adopt an offensive policy

[2] On 10th March aircraft from the American carriers *Lexington* and *Yorktown* attacked Japanese ships off Lae and Salamaua. Many sinkings were claimed at the time. In fact a minesweeper, a freighter and a light cruiser were sunk.

in the Indian Ocean "but action against the Malayan barrier involving large-scale combined operations is beyond our resources until Germany has been defeated".[3] In the British view, Japan would aim at consolidating as quickly as possible the East Asiatic area and completing it by the occupation of the whole of Burma. She would try to cut communications with China and force Chiang Kai-shek to make peace. An attempt to occupy a chain of bases extending from New Guinea to Samoa was likely, both to forestall the Allies and to cut their communications; and further raids on Trincomalee, Colombo and other bases in the Indian Ocean and the harassing of shipping on the supply routes to Australia, India and the Middle East were also probable.

It was believed that Japan did not plan to occupy Australia and New Zealand but would be content with their isolation through the occupation of bases on islands covering the approaches. The occupation or denial of Darwin was probable in order to protect the southern extremity of the greater East Asia area. Raids on other parts of the coast of Australia and New Zealand to cause a dispersal of Allied forces were also likely. As soon as operations in the south permitted, Japan might begin to regroup her forces for an attack on the Russian maritime provinces and it was thought that Japan would almost certainly attack Russia if she believed Russia was about to be defeated by Germany. War between Russia and Japan seemed probable but it was too early yet to say when it would break out.[4]

In Washington there were many paths to every decision. The grand strategy provided for fighting a defensive war in the Pacific for the time being, but the grand strategy was perpetually being contested and the contests were surrounded with all the rivalries between the United States Army and Navy and all the ambitions of the various commands. The American controversies, which are none of the business of this volume, swept the claims of Australia from wave to wave of bigger arguments. If one view prevailed Australia would be more important; if another view prevailed Australia would be less important.

It is necessary to stress the fact that there were different levels for such contests. The principle that the European theatre should be the decisive theatre had been established at the highest level even before Japan entered the war.[5] At the conference of December 1941-January 1942, just after Pearl Harbour, Churchill and his advisers devoted considerable effort to preparing the case for a continuance of that principle. Their fears concerning the agreed strategy proved groundless, and despite the critical

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[3] Telegram from Dominions Office, 27 Apr, in reply to telegram to Dominions Office, 17 Apr. Advisory War Council Agendum 30/1942, Supplement No. 1, 4 May. The information was noted by the Advisory War Council in Minute 936, 6 May 1942.

[4] An appreciation by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, dated 6 Apr, contained in Advisory War Council Agendum 32/1942, 5 May.

[5] H. L. Stimson and McG. Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (1948), p. 415; S. E. Morison, *Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions* (1950), p. 245, Vol IV in the series *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*; M. Matloff and E. M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1941-1942*, pp. 30 and 34. See *The Government and the People 1939-1941*, pp. 545-6 and 556-7, for a discussion of the position before the entry of Japan as it affected Australian relations with the United States.

position in the Pacific the decision to maintain a "beat Hitler first" policy was confirmed.[6]

> As far as I know (wrote Eisenhower) the wisdom of the plan to turn the weight of our power against the European enemy before attempting an all-out campaign against Japan has never been questioned by any real student of strategy. However—and here was the rub—it was easy enough to state this purpose as a principle but it was to prove difficult indeed to develop a feasible plan to implement the idea, and to secure its approval by the military staffs of two nations.[7]

The American Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marshall, Arnold and King, the Secretary for War, Henry L. Stimson, and General Eisenhower gave continued support to the agreed strategy, although at times—and more especially when it seemed, in July 1942, that the British were going back on the build-up of forces for a cross-Channel invasion—their loyalty to it was sharply tested. Within their ranks, however, Admiral King was constantly watching for an opportunity to switch more of the American effort to the Pacific. In this area the drive against the enemy would provide a primary role for the navy. In Europe action would primarily concern the army, and the navy's role would be restricted to covering the transport of men and materials, and some support of the prospective landings if and when they occurred. Moreover, in the Atlantic, it was likely that the United States Navy would operate under a British command. King, as chief of the United States Navy, saw in the Pacific a much more vital role for his service than any it could play in the Atlantic. Navy opinion, therefore, was strongly in favour of an early offensive in the Pacific.

The traditional rivalry between the army and the navy added to this conflict over policies towards the Pacific.[8]

The same rivalry contributed to difficulties in operations, for under MacArthur the South-West Pacific Area was an army command and, under Nimitz, the Pacific Ocean Area was a navy command and before any plan of operations could be decided there were almost inevitably heated discussions, but at the same time, MacArthur no less than the navy became an advocate of the importance of the Pacific theatre and, in the popular American mind, perhaps the major focus of feeling about the Pacific.[9]

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[6] W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol III, p. 571 et seq.

[7] D. D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (1948), pp. 31-2; see also Stimson and Bundy, pp. 415-16.

[8] "The Army and the Navy," wrote Stimson, "were called on in the Second World War to act with a cooperation and a mutual trust for which they had never been properly trained, and it required all the wisdom and self-restraint of which both sides were capable." (Stimson and Bundy, p. 505.) He was probably not without prejudice but the instances which he quotes are directed more at the lesser people in the Navy ("the Admirals", he calls them) than at the higher commands. He recalls the Navy refusal to share accommodation with the Army in Washington and thereby aid coordination between the two services; he recalls how Roosevelt, aware of the way in which the general public had been drawn into the controversy by the spectacle of the annual Army-Navy football game, restricted it to a token contest during the war. They disagreed over the negroes, and over voluntary enlistment.

Eisenhower (p. 30) to whom, in War Planning Division, fell the task of guiding the Army's role at Efate, in the New Hebrides, commented that that incident "brought home . . . the sketchy and unsatisfactory character of our contacts with the Navy".

Stimson (p. 516) quotes the conflict between the services over anti-submarine tactics which revealed the "destructive effect of the traditional mutual mistrust of the two services".

[9] The division of Australia and New Zealand in the process was opposed by the Australian Government, but strategically the Americans considered the division correct because, says Morison (Vol IV, p. 249*n*), "Australia was doubly menaced by enemy troops in the Bismarcks and New Guinea, so defence was a land-air task. . . . New Zealand on the other hand could not be threatened as long as the Allied navies controlled the sea approaches; its defence was primarily

In the view of many of the United States people, particularly those on the West Coast and in the Middle West, Japan was their greater enemy; ". . . only by an intellectual effort had they been convinced that Germany was their most dangerous enemy and should be disposed of before Japan; . . . the enemy whom the American people really hated, if they hated anyone, was Japan which had dealt them a foul blow".[1] Both the Australian political leaders and the American general could hope for a response to an appeal to American popular sentiment about the Pacific but none to an appeal to popular sentiment in Britain which was still under nightly bombing from the European continent.

As a consequence of the fact that the United States had "executive responsibility" in the Pacific and had established both army and navy commands in the Pacific, the decisions of the Australian Government about the conduct of the war effort could not help moving on the tides of American planning and action.

In general the American view in the Pacific early in 1942 meant that communications to Australia and New Zealand would be protected and Australia would be built up as a base from which the initial moves against Japan by the army and air force would be made.[2] To the United States army and air force Australia was, for the time being, their main base. To the United States Navy she was the last of the series of fortified bases in the line which stretched across the Pacific from Hawaii. It was to be expected that Australia would be regarded differently by the two services. The army would seek to advance north-westward through the islands; the navy to move westward across the Pacific. As the army advanced it was understandable that other bases should be developed by it, and that the importance of Australia should decline commensurately until the final assault upon Japan would be planned, not from the original base—Australia—but perhaps from the Philippines or Formosa or China itself.

By and large, the American Navy view in the Pacific prevailed during 1942 and 1943 and, so far as it did, the decision meant that communications to Australia and New Zealand and access to both as bases would be protected, but Australia was not to be built up in strength as the

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a naval task for which Noumea, Fiji, Tongatabu, etc. were key points in support of the line of communications." According to Morison the attachment of the Bismarcks and Solomons to MacArthur's command was King's idea, and he mentions this to refute the fact that "Admiral King has been accused of attempting to hamper and restrict General MacArthur's command". It seems necessary to remark in passing the strange American views of Australians. In the same footnote from which the above quotations are drawn Morison says that adding the Bismarcks and Solomons to MacArthur's command was done because King "felt it was essential to engage the attention of Australia to the defence of the approaches to their country, and shake them out of their isolationist attitude".

Stimson and Bundy, p. 507: "General MacArthur was a constant bone of contention; Stimson was bound to admit that the extraordinary brilliance of that officer was not always matched by his tact, but the Navy's astonishing bitterness against him seemed childish." See also W. D. Leahy, *I Was There* (English edition 1950), pp. 268-71. The background to the decisions on command is illuminated in Chapter XVII of *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (1966), by Forrest C. Pogue.

[1] Stimson and Bundy, pp. 429-30.

[2] Eisenhower had been asked on 14th December 1941 by Marshall: "What should be our general line of action?" and his answer included the statement: "Our base must be Australia, and we must start at once to expand it and to secure our communications to it. In this last we dare not fail. We must take great risks and spend any amount of money required." (Eisenhower, p. 25.) See also Matloff and Snell, pp. 87-8.

eventual hopping-off point for the main move against Japan. In Australia, however, during this time, MacArthur burned to prepare an opportunity to send his forces victoriously northwards in the major assault on the enemy. His own ambition, his sense of personal destiny, his conception of the best way to fight back against Japan, made it imperative to him that the South-West Pacific Command should develop into a major front in the war. Australia was a necessary element in his planning; its resources were a necessary adjunct to his strength; its security was a starting point; full cooperation with its Government would be needed by him in the early stages. To that extent there would be identity of interest with an Australian Government and an Australian Government might be able to exert an influence where he could not exert it.

The Australian Government appears to have accepted at once the view that its own national interest and need would be served by the strengthening of the South-West Pacific Command. For the immediate present, still under fear of invasion, the Curtin Government tended to concentrate on that objective. In identifying its cause so closely with the cause of MacArthur the Government may at times have been slow to realise that the perspective of the war seen from Washington was very different from that seen from Canberra. It was also perhaps hampered in its considerations of what was the best way of conducting the war in the Pacific because it was far more fully informed about MacArthur's view than about any other view, and by force of circumstances had identified its claims with the claims of the South-West Pacific Command. It also did not seem to be fully aware that in Washington MacArthur was seen as part of a problem to be handled as well as a commander to be used.

In this chapter, events will be traced to show that for more than twelve months, from March 1942, the Australian Government concentrated on claiming reinforcements for the South-West Pacific and advocated greater activity in the Pacific. This hampered its thinking about the war in other parts of the world and about the changing war situation in the Pacific while the effect of disappointment at the Allied response brought it very close at times to developing a grievance instead of a policy.

Caution is needed in passing judgment on the arguments presented by the Australian Government during this period. Sometimes the emphasis was placed on the peril of Australia, sometimes on the need to prepare an offensive. They were conducting a debate as well as forming a policy.

To reach any judgment on the successive decisions of the Government it is necessary to have an opinion on whether Australia was in fact defenceless in the face of grave danger and whether there was a practical possibility of launching an early offensive against the Japanese from Australia.

The answer to the first of these two questions depends, in part, on whether the opinion is held that the Japanese did intend to invade Australia. In the light of information now available but not fully known to the Australian Government in 1942 it is doubtful whether Japan had invasion plans worked out to a stage where an invasion could have been launched within the period now under review with the prospect of anything except

local and restricted success. The Japanese aim would appear to have been to deny the value of Australia to the Allies rather than to possess it.

The answer to the first question also depends in part on the size of the forces which were actually available in Australia to meet any prospective invasion. Was Australia in fact so denuded of strength as to be in grave danger from an attack of the scale that the Japanese could mount? As will be seen below, the Australian Government's views on the prospect of Japanese attack and on the adequacy of their own forces varied considerably from time to time.

The other question about the possibility of launching an offensive from Australia is more difficult to answer. The Australian Government's repeated advocacy of a joint naval offensive against Japan in the Pacific will have been remarked from the earliest weeks of the war in the East. Curtin often used fighting words in his public statements, particularly in those directed towards an American audience. As early as 13th March, in a broadcast to the United States as a prelude to a mission to that country by his Minister for External Affairs, he said, "Our minds are set on attack." He proudly spoke of the fighting spirit of Australians. "We are not thinking only of the immediate security of Australia," he said in a speech of 15th April. "With the growing assistance of the United States of America, we shall one day go out and drive the enemy from positions from which he now menaces our security, challenges the life-lines of the British Empire, and endangers democracy in the Pacific and in all the world."[3] The claim for reinforcements was often supported by the argument that they were needed for the ultimate offensive. There is no doubt that MacArthur wanted to prepare forces for an offensive and the Australian Government would clearly have been glad to have seen him do so.

Yet, after the end of April, as will be seen, the Australian Government was aware that the grand strategy agreed to by Britain and America allowed for an offensive only at some later date.

There are signs, too, that so far as the building up and use of Australian land forces were concerned, the interest of the Australian Government was predominantly in the defence of Australia from invasion and not with the preparation of another expeditionary force. The political limit was patent. Only the A.I.F. could be used outside Australian territory and it was difficult even to guess whether the Labour Party would lower the legal barrier presented by the *Defence Act,* reinforced by a provision in the *National Security Act.*[4] The difficulties of Curtin on this score were clearly apparent in a debate in the House of Representatives on 1st May when the Opposition attempted to score over the Government, in an amendment to a motion for printing a statement on the war situation, by calling for the removal of the limitation "in order that the Australian Imperial Force and the Australian Military Forces may be effectively welded into one fighting army available for offence as well as defence". In the embarrassments of that debate Curtin was pushed into saying that

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 25, p. 14.
[4] See *The Government and the People 1939-1941,* pp. 163-4, 167, 174-5 and 232.

"in the absence of naval and aerial superiority [in Australia] all talk about taking the offensive is meaningless" and he placed the emphasis on the need for the holding of Australia. He expressed the opinion, too, that the doubling of the air force would be far more advantageous in the prosecution of the war than the addition to the land forces of two or three divisions. "Ability to organise, equip and dispatch naval and air forces to meet the enemy is a far more valuable strategical conception than is any disposition or redisposition of the land forces."[5]

In the communications which passed regarding the return of the 9th Division, the only division of the A.I.F. remaining in the Middle East, the idea of building up an army for offensive operations was never expressed but only the idea of defending Australia. It would appear therefore that, although under the influence of MacArthur and in appeals to the United States Curtin frequently spoke of attack, the gathering together of land forces in Australia up to the end of June 1943 did not have behind it any clear and definite purpose of using them as an offensive force but only the idea of defending Australia from attack, and after June 1943, when the Australian Government had to face a readjustment of its war effort, the organisation of its military forces for offensive operations had to be newly considered. Do we come then to a simple policy of claiming reinforcements and advocating greater activity in the South-West Pacific or are there any other elements to be found consistently in the narrative in this chapter of Government decisions on the war effort from April 1942 to June 1943?

2—MACARTHUR TAKES COMMAND, APRIL-JUNE 1942

On 17th March General Douglas MacArthur arrived at Darwin, by air from the Philippines, initially to take command of all American Army forces in Australia, but soon to become the Supreme Commander of the South-West Pacific Area. St George, having killed his dragon, could not have been hailed more fervently as a great deliverer than was this distinguished military leader who had come to extinguish the Rising Sun. His arrival at Spencer Street station, Melbourne, on 21st March was like a grand entry in opera. The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Forde, and most of what was high in politics, administration and the fighting services, with a large crowd of the general public, had gathered to greet him. With a nice sense of the theatrical, this general, who had been heralded throughout the land as the most decorated man in the United States Army, stepped into the range of flash bulbs in the drab battle dress of a fighting soldier to which the glory of uniforms, red tabs and ribbons around him were a perfect foil.

His reception at Parliament House, Canberra, on 26th March, where he met Curtin for the first time, was surrounded with something of the awe reserved for royalty. The scene had the air from the start of being one

[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 797-802.

of the fateful meetings of history. In a measure it was. Curtin and MacArthur quickly found that they could work together. They quickly grew in respect for each other. Henceforward their understanding and their partnership became one of the major influences on what Australia tried to do in the war. The representative from a mining electorate who pushed aside the silk ropes of decorum and called in informal friendliness, "Hullo, Doug", was also showing that he was glad to see him. The newspaper headlines rang a peal throughout the land: "MacArthur, MacArthur, MacArthur."

The Supreme Commander established his headquarters in Melbourne at Menzies Hotel, which was taken over for the purpose, and set up under himself three commanders for the three arms of the forces in the South-West Pacific Area. As mentioned, General Blamey became Commander of Allied Land Forces (as well as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Army); General Brett, recently returned from the A.B.D.A. Command, became Commander of Allied Air Forces, and Vice-Admiral Leary Commander of Allied Naval Forces.

At his first meeting with the Advisory War Council, in Canberra on 26th March, in the course of a discussion on various matters related to his appointment and the task ahead, MacArthur said what Australian leaders were eager to hear. The Pacific was the real centre. The Allies should concentrate sufficient forces in the Pacific to strike a decisive blow in one place. To do this, they must be prepared to take chances in other theatres. Australia must stand firmly by its view that the Pacific was the predominant centre. The first step was to make Australia secure. After this had been accomplished, Australia should be organised as a base for the counter-stroke towards the Philippines and from there to attack Formosa. He would call on Australia for all the help she could give and would ask the Prime Minister to help him obtain from the United States whatever assistance they could give. He urged the concentration of a combined United States-United Kingdom fleet in the Pacific to undertake offensive operations against the Japanese. A supreme effort, which might well prove decisive, should be made in the Pacific in the near future while the outcome of the German-Russian conflict was still in doubt.

It was doubtful, he said, whether the Japanese would undertake an invasion of Australia as the spoils were not sufficient to warrant the risk. From a strategic point of view invasion of Australia would be a blunder, but the Japanese might try to overrun Australia in order to demonstrate their superiority over the white races. He inclined to the view that the main danger was from raids. He thought that the Japanese would also attempt to secure air bases in Australia. Australian anti-aircraft defences were very weak and the provision of adequate anti-aircraft defences for the main cities and air stations was essential.[6]

The arrival of MacArthur was followed by a brief period of high optimism during which the expectation of early and large reinforcements

[6] Advisory War Council Minute 869, 26 Mar 1942.

and the launching of an offensive ran high. It was believed that, whereas formerly the United States had an obligation only to provide supplies and equipment for their own units in Australia, they now had an obligation towards the strength of the whole theatre and MacArthur had the right to demand all that was necessary to furnish and equip Allied land, sea and air forces to carry out the purposes of his directive. The South-West Pacific Command would not simply request but could requisition and their claims would be irresistible.[7]

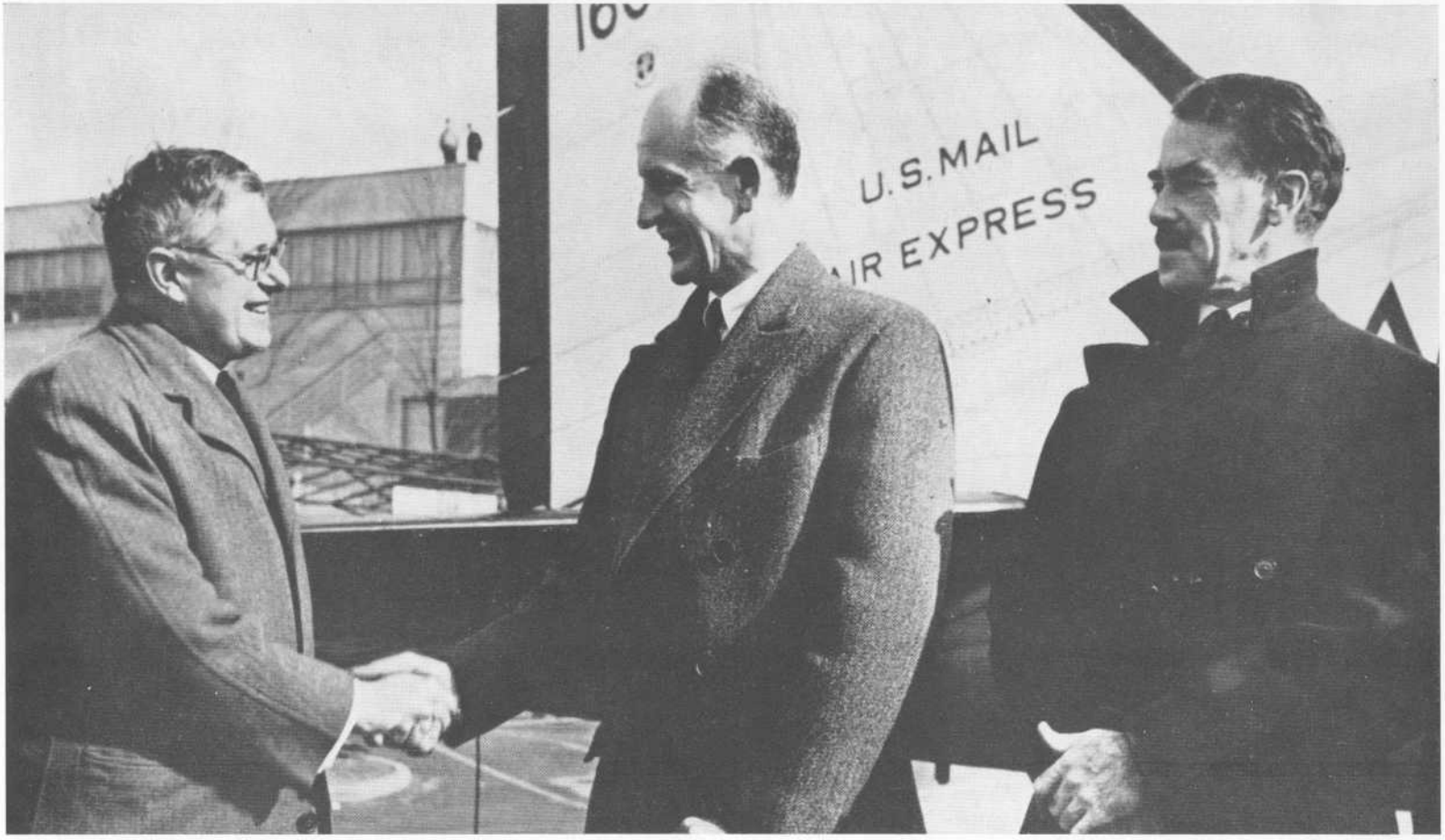
Both MacArthur and the Australian Government soon discovered, however, that the creation of a new command and the appointment of a Supreme Commander hold no magic to conjure up reinforcements and supplies. There were other and stronger claims from a hard-pressed Russia, from the Middle East, from Burma, where 20,000 tired British and Indian troops were retreating, and from India which was threatened by invasion and, like beleaguered China, almost devoid of aircraft. There was the mounting agitation for a second front in Europe. There was a war against Germany as well as one against Japan. In the Pacific theatre, the Middle theatre and the Atlantic theatre there were urgent tasks of maintaining bases and communications, supplying Britain so that she might make her contribution to war production, of combating German submarines and raiders, which had sunk 2,000,000 tons of Allied shipping in the first three months of the year—a rate higher than the rate at which ships were being built. The accretion of forces in Australia for the purposes of a directive which enjoined preparations for an offensive against Japan had to take its chance with other claims.

In early discussions between Curtin and MacArthur the Supreme Commander expressed bitter disappointment at the meagre assistance given or promised and declared that, far from allowing him to prepare to take offensive action in accordance with his directive, he would not have enough forces to defend Australia as a main base. While MacArthur made his representations to Marshall in Washington, Curtin, by instructions to Evatt in Washington and by cablegram to Churchill, pressed the case for more forces and equipment, for the diversion to Australia of the two British divisions which were on the way to the Middle East, for an aircraft carrier for the South-West Pacific and for more shipping.[8]

Churchill was blunt in his reply. There was no sign of a heavy mass invasion of Australia but danger in India had been increased by events in Burma. Why send to uninvaded Australia troops needed for an invaded India? MacArthur's proposals to divert the two British divisions temporarily to Australia pending the return of the A.I.F. would seem to involve the maximum expenditure and dislocation of shipping and escorts. Churchill held out no prospect of increasing the British allocation of shipping to the Pacific. The whole tonnage was engaged to the utmost in

[7] Telegram from Evatt, 19 Apr 1942.

[8] Advisory War Council Minute 915, 28 Apr, telegram to Evatt, 28 Apr, and to Dominions Office, 28 Apr. Curtin asked Churchill for the temporary diversion to Australia of the two British divisions until such time as the 9th Australian Division and the remainder of the 6th were returned to Australia.



Australian War Memorial

Dr H. V. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, being greeted by the United States Under-Secretary of State, Mr Sumner Welles, on his arrival in Washington on 20th March 1942. On the right is Mr R. G. Casey, Australian Minister to the United States.



Australian War Memorial

Rationing of clothing began in June 1942 and food rationing followed. The scale varied from time to time, as did the format of the ration books. In 1944 the weekly ration scale for each adult was: tea, 2 ounces; sugar, 16 ounces; butter, 6 ounces; meat, 2¼ pounds. All rationing had ceased by July 1950. Petrol rationing had been introduced in October 1940 and continued (with one short break in 1949) until February 1950.



Australian War Memorial

Customers being served at a knitting wool counter of a large city store in Melbourne on 16th June 1942, after being issued with their ration books.



Australian War Memorial

The Australian people as a whole responded eagerly to calls made to their patriotism. Net making for camouflage was one activity in which Australian women played a useful part. Some of the work was done at home, but at various centres in the cities office workers such as these devoted their lunch hours or gave an hour or two at the end of the day to the manufacture of camouflage nets.



Western Mail (Perth)

A house-to-house collection for scrap rubber organised by the Boy Scouts' Association in Perth, in July 1942. With the fall of the rubber-producing countries of Asia to the Japanese, rubber of all kinds became increasingly valuable.



Australian War Memorial

Mounted members of the Volunteer Defence Corps riding smartly out of camp during manoeuvres at Merboo, Victoria, in July 1943. The Volunteer Defence Corps or the "Home Guard" as it was alternatively known, developed from the Returned Soldiers League Volunteer Defence Corps which was formed in June 1940 and became a part of the Australian Military Forces in May 1941 with an establishment of 50,000, later increased to 80,000.



Australian War Memorial

Members of the V.D.C. loading a 3.7-inch anti-aircraft gun during training on the Kensington golf course, near Sydney.

transporting munitions to Russia, in heavy troop convoys around the Cape and in the straitened supplies to the British Isles.[9]

By early May MacArthur was reported to be both disillusioned and impatient and bent on having a showdown with those who had given him a directive which sounded grand but had no backing behind it.

In these circumstances Curtin moved towards the view that, if hope for an early large-scale offensive against Japan had faded for lack of forces, Australia should, for the time being, work for a purely defensive strategy centred on the security of Australia and New Zealand and try to ensure that she had forces for that purpose.[1] Evatt, then recently arrived in London from Washington, where he had become aware of the difficulties the MacArthur claim might meet, counselled Curtin against too precipitate a showdown on a demand for forces to mount a major offensive from the South-West Pacific. The first point was to defend Australia successfully and the second to "be able to operate offensively within a reasonable time", and if the claim for forces was based on that interpretation of the directive it should be possible to make the flow of supplies to Australia reasonably satisfactory.[2]

In a statement to Parliament on 29th April Curtin said that everything was being done to defend Australia "as a base for operations", but added: "As things stand, operations mean the holding of this Commonwealth, for, if it be not held, all talk of using it as a springboard for an offensive becomes meaningless."[3]

In the same speech—and it may be noted that this passage was linked with an exhortation to the Australian people not to abate their war effort

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[9] Telegram from Dominions Office, 1 May 1942.

MacArthur's use of Curtin to bypass his proper channels of communication produced criticism in both London and Washington. When Curtin communicated the requests to Churchill he said that he was doing so at General MacArthur's request.

"Surprised that General MacArthur should have apparently cut through channels in this way, Mr Churchill passed the message on to the President with the remark that he was quite unable to meet these demands. 'I should be glad to know,' he added, 'whether these requirements have been approved by you . . . and whether General MacArthur has any authority from the United States for taking such a line.'

"Taken to task in the matter by General Marshall the next day, MacArthur, who had just sent Marshall a message complaining about the general inadequacy of his forces, replied on 3 May that he should not be held responsible for the use to which Mr Curtin had put his remarks. He had made them, he said, at Mr Curtin's request, and purely as he thought for the Australian's personal information. His position was, MacArthur pointed out, a delicate one. Mr Curtin expected him to advise the Australian Government on all matters relating to Australia's defence, and if he was to continue as Supreme Commander, and hold the confidence of the Australian Government, he had no choice but to do so. The preoccupation of the Australian Government with the security of its country was well known. The difficulty was that the Australians, both in government and out, were fearful that insufficient forces had been allotted to the defence of their country, a view in which he in his professional military capacity could not help but concur. . . .

"[On 6th May] the President, in a personal message to General MacArthur, explained why it had been decided not to increase the existing allocation in his area. . . . The President told General MacArthur that the difficulty of his position was appreciated, and the fact understood that he had 'to be an ambassador as well as Supreme Commander'. 'I see no reason,' Mr Roosevelt said, 'why you should not continue discussing military matters with the Australian Prime Minister, but I hope you will try to have him treat them as confidential matters, and not use them as appeals to Churchill and me.' . . .

"[On 8th May] General MacArthur told Mr Curtin (who at once passed on the information to Dr H. V. Evatt, his Minister for External Affairs) that he was 'determined to seek a clarification in regard to the precise terms of his directive, and the forces which were to be made available to him to enable him to fulfil it.' 'He would not be content,' he said, 'to be left with a directive which sounds grand but has no backing behind it.' " S. Milner, *Victory in Papua*, pp. 28-30. A similar account is given in Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942*, p. 378.

[1] Telegram to Evatt, 6 May 1942.

[2] Telegram from Evatt, in London, 8 May 1942.

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 604.

—Curtin returned again to the danger to Australia. After recounting that in recent action to the north of Australia the Japanese had suffered heavy aircraft losses, Curtin said:

> It is most necessary to regard these facts in their proper proportion. Japan is still able, almost at will, to reinforce the Timor and New Guinea areas with men and aircraft. We have not, as yet, been able substantially to weaken the enemy's position in the regions occupied by it in the advance southward. The Japanese are still firmly established in New Guinea and other islands to the north and north-east of Australia. Common sense dictates that we face the fact that Japan will do everything in an attempt to render Australia impotent as a base for an Allied offensive. The Government regards an outright Japanese attack on Australia as a constant and undiminished danger. As a part of this purpose, and in any event, the Japanese may seek to isolate Australia by cutting the sea routes whereby essential supplies reach this country. The recent Japanese occupation of bases in the Solomon Islands undeniably suggests that the Japanese are reaching out towards our seaborne communications with America. Similarly, the presence of Japanese naval forces in the Indian Ocean means a direct and serious threat to our western approaches from Europe, Asia and the Middle East.[4]

On 6th May the long resistance of the Americans in the last corner of the Philippines ended with surrender. On 5th May the naval and air battle of the Coral Sea began. Part of a Japanese invasion fleet, moving southwards (its objective was Port Moresby) was intercepted and after an action spread over the next three days was forced to withdraw. The Japanese losses were reported in the press as 1 aircraft carrier, 1 heavy cruiser, 1 light cruiser, 2 destroyers, 4 gunboats and 1 supply vessel, with another aircraft carrier, heavy cruiser and seaplane tender damaged. These claims were to prove very wide of the mark; we now know that the enemy lost the carrier *Shoho* and the carrier *Shokaku* was damaged, while Allied losses were the carrier *Lexington,* the destroyer *Sims* and an oiler *Neosho.* The enemy transports turned back undamaged.

The results were not fully known in Australia until the 12th, but the encounter spurred MacArthur to action and renewed in Curtin the determination to keep the war away from Australia. With her successes in Asia and the islands completed, Japan would now be freer than she had hitherto been to group larger forces against Australia. The Coral Sea encounter told of a threat as well as a deliverance.

Meanwhile, with the clearer appearance of danger in the Pacific, there were some signs of a decrease in danger in the Indian Ocean. On 5th May the British had landed on Madagascar and, with the surrender of its Vichy-ite commanders two days later, removed a danger about which Australia had expressed concern as long ago as 21st March.[5] It is true that defeat was almost complete in Burma, but while appreciating the danger to China and India, Australia does not appear to have considered the loss of Burma as being of any immediate concern to the security of Australia.[6]

MacArthur, in an "estimate of the general strategical situation", which

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[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 600.

[5] Telegram to Dominions Office, 21 Mar 1942.

[6] For example, see *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 602 and 604.

he forwarded to Curtin on 12th May, declared that Japan could now withdraw a considerable force of troops from the Philippines, Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, and its navy, in spite of the recent reverse, was in a position to undertake a further offensive. There were "most dangerous possibilities". "We have . . . in this theatre," he said, "at the present time all the elements that have produced disaster in the Western Pacific since the beginning of the war." He discounted the likelihood of a major attack against India and argued that the first movement would be against the South-West Pacific. He also argued that the building up of Allied strength under his command in the South-West Pacific would stop the Japanese southward drive and that an Allied offensive from the South-West Pacific would protect India and help Russia. The defence of India "should be made in the Pacific rather than the Indian Ocean" and "the second front, of which the United Nations are in such desperate need and for which the Russians are clamouring, should be opened in the Pacific Ocean area. It can be prepared with more ease and greater rapidity at this point than at any other. It would provide immediate assistance to the Russians by the relief of the pressure being exerted on them in Siberia, thus releasing Russian forces for application on the European front or permitting the Russians to take advantage of the offensive action of their Allies by joining in the attack on Japan."

In particular MacArthur said that he had asked Washington for two aircraft carriers for the navy under his command, an additional army corps of three divisions, fully trained and equipped for operations, and a first-line strength of 1,000 aircraft.[7]

As a result of discussions with MacArthur, Curtin accepted the substantial part of the Supreme Commander's appreciation, and in a communication to Evatt in London, which was repeated with modifications to the Australian Legation in Washington, for communication to Roosevelt himself, he restated the Australian Government's views on 13th May. These views were based on the assumption that Japan would move first against the South-West Pacific Area and leave India alone, and supported the thesis that the best way to protect India and help Russia was to fight Japan in the South-West Pacific.

> In view of this probable course of action that is open to the enemy, it is of vital importance to ensure that the forces in the South-West Pacific Area are sufficient to ensure its successful defence. As General Wavell said when Commander-in-Chief of the A.B.D.A. Area, the Japanese drive must be stopped by making a stand and fighting him somewhere. Australia, with its manpower and resources, is the last area in the South-West Pacific where this is possible. If, at the same time, Japanese home territory, overseas bases and lines of communication can be regularly raided, the maximum defensive-offensive will be developed. The defensive position having been secured, an offensive strategy can be adopted as soon as the necessary forces are gathered.

[7] Incidentally it may be noted that, in his conversation with Curtin, MacArthur facing an actual situation against a known enemy, differed from the Australian Chiefs of Staff on only one point and that touched the controversy on Australian defence which had been proceeding for 20 years past. In a recent appreciation the Australian Chiefs of Staff had stated that, without adequate naval and air power, 25 divisions were necessary for the defence of Australia. MacArthur said that if the enemy had superior naval and air power no land forces would be adequate and that air power, both seaborne and land-based, was a vital necessity. Quoted by Curtin in telegram to Evatt, 13 May 1942.

Yet this argument for an offensive strategy was expanded in a way that threw the main and final emphasis on the defence of Australia:

> If Japan should move in force against Australia and obtain a foothold, as threatened to occur last week with the Coral Sea action, it may be too late to send assistance. Possibly in the long run the territory might be recovered but the country may have been ravished and the people largely decimated. History would gravely indict such a happening to a nation which sacrificed 60,000 of its men on overseas battlefields in the last war and, at its peril, has sent its naval, military and air forces to fight overseas in this one. In the defence of Britain, after the fall of France, there still remained the navy and air force to repel the invader and the air force did so. Australia is not so favourably placed. It is a vast territory with poor communications, a small naval squadron, a relatively small army, neither adequately equipped nor fully trained, and a small air force. With superior sea power the enemy can bring to bear superior force and can sever or seriously harass the lines of communication for overseas supplies. It is imperatively and vitally urgent to strengthen this base while time and circumstances permit.
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> The defence of the South-West Pacific Area is an obligation of the United Nations, who have approved the directive of the Commander-in-Chief and appointed him to the supreme command. It devolves on them to provide the forces required. Australia is developing its maximum potential, but it is not sufficient as the Commander-in-Chief has already stated. The deficiency must come from elsewhere and come quickly.[8]

Attitudes at this time are further revealed in the mingling of relief and disappointment at the outcome of the engagement in the Coral Sea—relief that the enemy had been repulsed and a "grave threat" averted, disappointment that it had not been possible to deal him a heavy blow and that the whole of the Japanese convoy of 24 "transports" had fallen back to Rabaul unscathed.[9]

In London, Evatt was finding it a "continual struggle" to make the authorities appreciate the "danger" to Australia.[1] Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff still adhered to the view that a full-scale invasion of Australia was highly improbable. In the course of his mission he also learnt, and Australia was informed for the first time, of a decision which set an even more rigid limit to the reinforcement of the Pacific.

The grand strategy of the war had been agreed upon by Roosevelt and Churchill in Washington in January 1942, and Evatt now discovered that the substance of their agreement was to "beat Hitler first". There had been hints of this before, but Australia had never known that there was a firm and precise agreement. After his own study of the documents relating to the Washington talks, which were now communicated to Australia for the first time, Evatt expressed the conclusion that the directive for the South-West Pacific Area, which Australia had agreed to in early April, clearly contained a strategy that was primarily defensive in character. The offensive was to take place in the future. The documents, however, recognised the need to maintain the security of Australia.

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[8] Telegram to Evatt, 13 May and to Washington, 14 May 1942.

[9] Telegram to Evatt, 13 May 1942. The convoy had been intended for Port Moresby, and Allied Intelligence was convinced of this before the convoy sailed.
In fact there were only eleven transports although there were fifteen other vessels (escort, minesweepers, oilers, etc.) in the convoy.

[1] Telegram from Evatt, 17 May 1942.

Having become aware of these Washington decisions, Evatt in his work in London to obtain reinforcements and supplies emphasised, first, that Australia was never consulted about the grand strategy and second, that a strong case could be made against the wisdom of the agreed strategy. If, however, the agreed strategy had to be accepted, there was a joint obligation on the United States and the United Kingdom to provide the South-West Pacific Command with sufficient defences to carry out that portion of the grand strategy which was laid down in the directive for the South-West Pacific.

Besides influencing the arguments which Evatt developed in his immediate task of obtaining reinforcements and supplies, the documents on grand strategy which he sent to Australia with his own comments had a marked effect on the development of Australian thinking on the war.

Looking to the past, the Australian Government and its military advisers found it "surprising" that they and their representatives in London and Washington had not been acquainted with the decision to beat Germany as the primary enemy and that in the various appreciations of the war situation forwarded to them the existence of this agreement on grand strategy had not been stated, although there had been hints that such a view was held. They also found it "interesting" that although the agreement had said that the security of Australia, New Zealand and India must be maintained and that Singapore, the East Indies barrier, the Philippines, Rangoon and the route to China must be held, most of these "vital interests" had in fact been lost and the minimum required for the security of Australia had not been provided. They agreed, too, with Evatt's contention that if there was to be any modification of the grand strategy Australia would have to insist upon "prior consultation to a greater degree".

Looking to the future, they saw various possibilities, to which Evatt had drawn attention. In Washington there was the known difference between Marshall, advocate of the accepted strategy, and King, who wanted to concentrate on the war in the Pacific. The Russians were demanding and Anglo-American plans were already being advanced for a second front against Germany in Western Europe. The situation in the Mediterranean was precarious. A Japanese attack on Russia or a Japanese move on Alaska was possible. In addition there were "the strong and insistently repeated complaints" of shortages of aircraft from Russia, and the "urgent and sometimes piteous appeals" from China and the Commander-in-Chief in India; the "irritating criss-cross" between Washington and London in the functioning of the joint machinery as well as lesser difficulties on assignment and the uncertainties that came from secretiveness. In such circumstances what would be the most hopeful line for Australia to take?

Evatt, who had obtained a promise that substantial equipment for the land forces in Australia would be shipped in June and July, and that three fully-equipped Spitfire squadrons would be sent from the United Kingdom

to Australia before the end of June, felt that progress had been made and his counsel inclined towards moderating Australian demands:

> Considering the difficulties created by the agreed grand strategy, on which we were never consulted, the dramatic improvement in air fighting over the last three months in the Australian area, the fact that the United States accepted a primary responsibility for the Pacific and that certain soreness had to be healed, I feel that the work of the mission here has been successful. We have greatly increased the personal concern of the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff in our area, we certainly have made the British public and press more alive to our dangers and difficulties and I think we are now assured of far greater support in Washington from the British representatives there. The key is to retain the active interest and support of Churchill. He is supreme in the Cabinet and in the country and I suggest your making the fullest use of your right of confidential communication with him.[2]

The documents relating to the grand strategy received from Evatt were referred by the War Cabinet to the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces, the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Chief of the Air Staff and, in a joint report, dated 1st June, they expressed themselves as being broadly in agreement with the principles stated, subject to the observation that, although Germany still remained the main enemy, Japanese influence upon the final outcome of the war had not yet been fully realised.

The service chiefs proceeded to advance, from the Australian point of view, what was later to become familiarly known as a global strategy. Their paper was significant from the fact that its subsequent acceptance by Curtin marked the first occasion since Japan entered the war on which the Australian Government had strongly affirmed this point, although Evatt had groped towards it in some of his speeches. Now the Government took up the phrase "a global war" instead of "a Pacific war", but only as a new argument for bringing greater strength to bear against Japan. For them the call to look at the war as a world war meant "don't forget the Pacific". And that also reflected MacArthur's view.

The Australian military leaders drew attention to the interrelation of the Middle East and India and the effect that Japanese success against India would have on the Middle East, and to the effect that a Japanese attack on Russia would have on the fighting in Europe, and continued:

> Considerations of this sort point to the conclusion that the war is one and indivisible and that it is not sufficient to adopt a merely defensive policy towards Japan which would allow the initiative to remain with her. An offensive policy against Japan is therefore advocated with a view to bringing about the defeat of Germany as well as Japan.

The case for an offensive against Japan was strengthened by recent developments, the report of the service chiefs continued. The British Fleet in the Indian Ocean was now strong enough to prevent an attack on Western Australia and would soon be a deterrent to an attack on eastern Australia. In the Pacific Ocean the United States Fleet, together with the Royal Australian Navy and the combined air forces, had recently repulsed

[2] Telegrams (4) from Evatt, 28 May 1942.

an attack on Australian territory. The rapid development of the Australian land forces and the additional American reinforcements had made a large-scale operation against the vital centres of Australia a difficult task already, and with every additional month of training and increasing equipment the task would become more difficult for the enemy. The land forces in Australia were forced at present into a completely passive role, and about 12 divisions were being contained in Australia while the Japanese forces were almost completely freed for operations elsewhere. All these considerations made it most desirable to employ part of the forces in Australia in offensive operations with limited objectives within their capacity as soon as it was practicable to do so. Naval policy must necessarily dictate the moment for commencing an offensive in the Pacific, as, until Japanese sea supremacy had been successfully challenged, combined operations on a large scale with the object of regaining lost possessions must necessarily be attended with considerable risk. This did not imply that offensive operations with limited objectives should not be considered. As neither the United States Fleet in the Pacific Ocean nor the Eastern Fleet in the Indian Ocean was strong enough by itself to challenge the Japanese Fleet, it was desirable to create a combined naval force capable of doing so. To this end the naval strength in the Indian Ocean should be reduced to the lowest point possible and the Pacific Fleet strengthened to enable it to take the offensive and thereby relieve the pressure in the Indian Ocean. Such a movement of naval forces should be part of combined action against the Japanese in the Pacific, in which the suggested role of Australian forces was to take the offensive against Japanese-held bases in the New Guinea-Rabaul area.

This report and the accompanying documents were referred to the Advisory War Council, and, on their recommendation, the conclusions were accepted by the Government and embodied in a draft telegram to Evatt with instructions to press the acceptance of this view in Washington as part of strong efforts to obtain the whole of MacArthur's requisitions for forces and equipment. In support of these requisitions, strong representations should also be made regarding the commitments accepted by Australia in other theatres before the outbreak of war with Japan.

In accordance with the suggestion of the Advisory War Council the draft was referred to MacArthur before being dispatched. In the meantime, however, the Battle of Midway Island, 4th to 7th June, in which four enemy carriers and a cruiser were sunk and another cruiser damaged,[3] had changed the outlook in the Pacific. In shaping its own theories of a naval strategy the Australian Government had imperfect knowledge of what the secretive King was in fact doing.

MacArthur advised against dispatch of the instructions to Evatt. He said that it was necessary to make a new assessment of the strategical

[3] So that the later action would not be prejudiced, some details of the Coral Sea action had been withheld (communiqué issued by the U.S. Navy Department, *New York Times*, 13 Jun 1942). The Australian newspapers (8th June) reported a battle near Midway in which the enemy had lost "at least two and possibly three aircraft carriers . . . one or two more carriers have been damaged . . . three battleships have been damaged . . . and two cruisers crippled". In fact, in the two battles, Japan had lost five of the nine carriers with which she entered the war (*Shoho, Akagi, Hiryu, Kaga, Soryu*), leaving four plus one commissioned in May 1942.

situation in the light of further information and he added his view that the defensive position of Australia was now assured.

In the light of this advice and a further report from Evatt[4] holding out a brighter prospect of a more active policy against Japan in the South-West Pacific, in view of the results of Midway, it was decided to withhold the draft telegram.[5]

In a national broadcast on 17th June 1942, appealing for subscriptions to the Second Liberty Loan, Curtin spoke of the importance of the fighting in Russia and the Middle East and of the submarine war against Allied shipping and continued:

> What I have told you means that Australia is part of the total war and that the total war includes Australia. We face not only the perils which indirectly would beset us if the Allied forces were to meet disaster elsewhere, but also we face directly the menace that Japan presents at our very threshold. It means that Australia cannot divorce herself from the implications of all that happens elsewhere, but it also means that Australia cannot be set aside as an afterthought, the problem of whose defence can be solved when other more pressing matters have been adjusted. It is vital to the grand strategy of the Allied cause that Japan shall not take Australia. That viewpoint stressed so strongly by Australia in the past few months, has now been recognised in the places where it is vital that it be recognised. Further it is vital to the United Nations' cause that the war against Japan shall be won and it can be won only if Australia is held and if Australia is strong and if Australia's capacity to strike carries the full punching power that the Australian people and our Allies can accumulate.
>
> I say flatly it is possible that Australia can be lost. And if that happens, then Hawaii and the whole North American coast, from Alaska to Canada down to Mexico, will be open to Japanese attack free of any threat from any base in the Japanese rear. Had the outcome of the Coral Sea battle been adverse who could give guarantees as to the consequences for Australia? That battle was crucial with fate. The combined effect of the Coral Sea, Midway Island and Aleutian[6] battles, while frustrating from Japan's point of view, is far from decisive in the struggle through which we must pass if we are to reach our men locked up in Singapore; if we are to free the Netherlands East Indies; if we are to re-enter the Philippines; if we are to relieve China, and if we are to strike at the very heart of Japan. And these things—all of them—we must do.[7]

At a later stage he asked: "Will Australians do less than the Russians?" and declared: "We face invasion, and the horrors that accompany it, just as surely as the Russian people experience it today. They withhold nothing, neither must we." He held up the "matchless valour" of Australian soldiers as an example.

"I remind you," he said to the people of Australia, "that, but for a recent merciful deliverance, the enemy might now be established in Australia, attacking various centres. We had a deliverance like that of Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain."

At a distance it may be possible to criticise the Prime Minister's description of the state of the war for being exaggerated, but there is ample

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[4] Telegram of 10 Jun 1942.

[5] Advisory War Council Minute 955, 4 Jun, and 960, 11 Jun 1942.

[6] There had been Japanese attacks on American bases in the Aleutians, chiefly Dutch Harbour, on 3rd and 4th June at the time of the Midway action. The Japanese subsequently occupied Attu and Kiska Islands in the western Aleutians on 7th June.

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 32, pp. 11-12.

confirmation in other contemporary statements that he did see the danger and the strategic role of Australia in that way. A week later, answering critics, he said, "I told the plain facts."

On this and other occasions Curtin used Russia as the prime example to Australians and went to some pains to make it clear that the Australian case had to be considered in relation to the claims of the Soviet Union for increased British and American aid. In part this was probably the outcome of a genuine admiration for the Russian resistance to Germany and it was also linked with a strategic argument that the defeat of Russia would strengthen Japan's position by lessening the need for watchfulness in Manchuria. Another very persuasive factor was the growing pressure, particularly in the left wing of the Prime Minister's own party, of a campaign for aid to Russia and for the opening of a Second Front in Europe. The campaign had become evident before Japan struck but gained in weight throughout 1942. The left wing of Labour never appears to have responded to MacArthur's suggestions that the Second Front should be in the Pacific, for Germany not Japan was Russia's enemy.

While the Australian Government had been pressing for reinforcements and expressing their views on higher policy, the claim for the return of the whole of the A.I.F. from the Middle East had been pursued. When Australia offered on 3rd March, when Java was being overrun and the Japanese were nearing Rangoon, to divert two brigade groups of the A.I.F. to add temporarily to the garrison of Ceylon, the Government took occasion to remind the United Kingdom of the understanding that the 9th Division would return to Australia as soon as possible.[8] A week later, after further discussions by cable between Roosevelt and Churchill regarding the Australian claim to be reinforced so that it might be held as a vital base for the offensive against Japan, Churchill forwarded to Curtin a copy of a message from the President to the effect that the United States would be willing to send two more divisions to Australia and New Zealand but, because of the need to view the war as a whole and because of shipping difficulties, this was dependent on the retention of a similar number of Australian and New Zealand divisions in the Middle East, India and Ceylon. Churchill, after advancing various arguments, expressed the hope that Australia would feel able to leave the 9th Division in the Middle East, where it was "most sorely needed" and promised to send on the brigades of the 6th Division from Ceylon as soon as the minimum defence arrangements for the island could be made.[9] Page, in reporting to the same effect, urged very serious consideration of "the President's proposal".[1]

In an acknowledgment to Churchill on the 20th, Curtin referred to the proposal as a promise that a second American division would be sent to Australia "if the 9th A.I.F. is allowed to remain in the Middle East".[2] From telegrams which he sent on the same day to Page in London and

[8] Telegram to Dominions Office, 3 Mar 1942.
[9] Telegram from Dominions Office, 10 Mar 1942.
[1] Telegram from Page, 9 Mar 1942.
[2] Telegram to Dominions Office, 20 Mar 1942.

Evatt in Washington, however, there would appear to have been some doubt in Curtin's mind whether the proposal had originated with Churchill or with Roosevelt and a suspicion that, after an understanding had been reached that the 9th should return to Australia as soon as possible if part of the 6th were detained in Ceylon, Churchill had made some new representations to the President on the matter to bring about a different result. Curtin objected that the disposition of the A.I.F. was not a matter for bilateral discussion between the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the President. He asked Evatt to discuss the question in Washington with the President to find out the strength of his feelings on the request to keep the 9th in the Middle East. Among points he mentioned for Evatt's guidance were that the offer of two brigades to Ceylon had been made on the understanding that the 9th would return; that Australian land, naval and air defences were all inadequate in spite of the conditional promise of another American division; that the first responsibility of Australia was the security of Australia and "we must be assured of this before we are in a position to assist elsewhere"; and that there was an "important psychological aspect" inasmuch as the morale of the 9th would be affected if their comrades returned to defend their homeland and they did not. Moreover there was the difficulty of maintaining a regular flow of reinforcements overseas.

These messages crossed in transit another one from Page saying that the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington were pressing the British Chiefs of Staff for information as to whether plans might proceed on the assumption that the 9th Division remained in the Middle East for the present.[3]

The Australian reply was deferred until after discussions with Blamey and MacArthur. At his discussion with War Cabinet on 31st March on the reorganisation and command of the army in Australia, Blamey expressed the view that the 9th Division should be returned to Australia "as soon as it can be replaced in the Middle East and the necessary shipping is available".[4]

At the end of March, Churchill informed Curtin that two British divisions would shortly be rounding the Cape, an infantry division during the latter part of April and an armoured division at the end of May. If by that time Australia was being heavily invaded he would divert both divisions to the aid of Australia. By invasion he did not mean localised attacks but invasion by, say, eight or ten Japanese divisions. This arrangement would also apply to other troops passing to the East, but, Churchill added, he was still by no means sure that the need would arise, especially in view of the energetic measures Australia was taking and United States help.[5]

Up to this stage the 9th had been wanted to strengthen the forces in

[3] Telegram to Evatt, 20 Mar; to Page, 20 Mar; from Page, 21 Mar; from Page, 22 Mar; to Page, 24 Mar 1942.
[4] War Cabinet Minute 2053, 31 Mar 1942.
[5] Advisory War Council Minute 880, 1 Apr 1942.

Australia. After the arrival of MacArthur, the Australian demand for its return was less urgent for a time. At a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 8th April Curtin quoted the view expressed to him by MacArthur that, if the naval and air strength asked for in the Australian Chiefs of Staff's appreciation of 3rd April were provided, the 9th Division could be allowed to remain in the Middle East. Any agreement to its retention there should be conditional on the earliest possible provision of the required naval and air strength for Australia. Speaking generally, MacArthur thought that the disposition of land forces at the present time should not be by transfers between probable theatres of operations, but by the transfer of forces from non-operational areas. This was prudent militarily and would also conserve shipping—a matter of vital importance.

With the approval of the Council, Curtin informed the United Kingdom on 14th April that although the Government's view was that all Australian troops abroad should be returned to Australia, it was prepared to agree to the postponement of the return of the 9th Division until it could be replaced in the Middle East and the necessary shipping and escort could be made available for its transportation to Australia.[6]

In agreeing to the postponement the Australian Government, in a way characteristic of their communications to the United Kingdom, put on record the understanding obtained by Evatt in Washington, that, "broadly speaking, all American forces in Australia or to go to Australia in the future, are being dispatched unconditionally and without any question of Australia's right to decide the destination of the A.I.F.". Regarding Churchill's offer to divert British divisions in case of Japanese invasion a comment was made to the effect that if Japan could launch an invasion she would have such command of the sea that it would probably be impossible to reinforce Australia to any great extent by seaborne forces.[7]

Three weeks later the Australian Government was again pressing for the return of the 9th. The change coincided with the failure to obtain other reinforcements for which MacArthur had been hoping and the gloomy view of the Pacific situation which developed at the time of the Battle of the Coral Sea. On 28th April, as previously related, Curtin, on the recommendation of MacArthur, made unsuccessful representations to Churchill for the diversion to Australia of the two British divisions, for the allotment of an aircraft carrier to the South-West Pacific, and for the provision of additional shipping on the Australian-American run. The request was for the temporary diversion of the British divisions until such time as the 9th Division and the two brigade groups of the 6th Division at Colombo were returned. Churchill promised to relieve the troops in Ceylon at the end of May, but said nothing of the 9th Division. MacArthur now changed his advice and, at his prompting and with the support of Blamey, Curtin at once told Evatt, then in London, to press the United Kingdom to name a date for the return of the 9th Division. At a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 6th May the view was clearly expressed that if, as

[6] Advisory War Council Minute 894 and War Cabinet Minute 2078, 8 Apr. Advisory War Council Minute 906, 16 Apr; telegram to Dominions Office, 14 Apr 1942.

[7] Telegram to Dominions Office, 14 Apr 1942.

appeared to be the case, the concentration in the South-West Pacific of forces for large-scale operations against the Japanese was ruled out, the predominant concern was the security of Australia and Australia should press for the defensive strength necessary to achieve this more limited objective.[8]

No result ensued and at the end of May Blamey urged new arguments for an early decision. Excluding certain personnel under orders to return to Australia, there were 1,800 officers and 28,821 other ranks in the Middle East and, on the basis of normal war wastage, this provided only three months' reinforcements for the 9th Division over and above war establishment. At the same time he was trying to organise a balanced army in Australia. It was essential to make a decision so that he could plan knowing definitely what forces would be available and so that, if the 9th were to remain abroad, provision could be made for its reinforcement. He again urged its return to Australia. MacArthur, too, thought the Government should insist on its return "but not in too abrupt a manner" and, if the 9th could not be returned, it should receive a *quid pro quo* in the shape of corresponding British forces.

By the middle of June, however, the outlook in the Pacific was beginning to change, and, in the opinion of MacArthur, the defence of Australia was assured. In these circumstances and having regard to the fact that a German offensive in the Middle East had again placed Egypt in danger, both Blamey and MacArthur advised Curtin, and Curtin recommended to the War Cabinet on 23rd June that the return of the 9th Division should not be pressed at the moment. This view was endorsed by the War Cabinet but, in communicating it to the United Kingdom they also raised the question whether there were plans for the evacuation of the 9th if things continued to go badly in the Middle East.[9] They also decided to stress the urgency of the return to Australia of the two A.I.F. brigades in Ceylon.

During the second half of June the war in the Pacific seemed to be at one of those pauses that come between great events. The invasion of Australia had not been attempted with the rush and fury that had been expected in March. The Japanese had received two checks at sea. What were they preparing to do next? They were clearly consolidating their position in New Guinea and edging out into the adjacent islands. Their main naval forces were reported to be in home waters and the future movements of these might perhaps give the key to Japanese intentions.

At the beginning of June there had been spectacular events on the Australian coast to keep men's imaginations working. On the morning of 30th May a reconnaissance plane was over Sydney. On the night of 31st May-1st June five large submarines, one of which was equipped with an aircraft, launched three midget submarines about 10 miles from Sydney Heads. One midget fouled the boom net which was part of the harbour

[8] Advisory War Council Minutes 931 and 932, 6 May; telegrams from Dominions Office, 27 Apr and 1 May; War Cabinet Agendum 275/1942, 23 Jun 1942.

[9] War Cabinet Minute 2215, 30 Jun and War Cabinet Agendum 275/1942, endorsed by Advisory War Council Minute 979, 1 Jul 1942.

defences and the crew destroyed the craft and themselves. The second midget entered the harbour successfully and after being fired on by *Chicago,* a United States heavy cruiser, later took up a position of attack and fired its torpedoes at the cruiser. Both missed but while one ran ashore and did not explode the other hit bottom and the resulting explosion wrecked the former Sydney ferry *Kuttabul* which was being used as a naval depot ship; this submarine then left the harbour. The third submarine was attacked first near the harbour entrance and finally and successfully in Taylor Bay. The remains of the two submarines were later recovered.[1] Harbourside residents heard the commotion and the explosions almost at their doorsteps. A.R.P. posts were manned as for a raid. A week later, on the night 7th-8th June, shells from a Japanese submarine were fired at Sydney and Newcastle but the damage was small. During the first fortnight of the month three freighters were torpedoed off the coast and four other vessels narrowly escaped.

In the far north, after six weeks without incident, Darwin was raided on four nights in succession in the middle of the month and in the attack of 15th June four persons were killed and twelve wounded.

In a message to Churchill on 25th June in connection with a postponement of the delivery of Spitfire aircraft to Australia, Curtin spoke of the Coral Sea Battle as only "a temporary deliverance of the Commonwealth from the immediate threat of invasion" and of the great strength of the enemy. The Japanese still had the initiative, he said, and their recent inaction was probably only a temporary lull in their offensive.[2]

Although this fear of invasion persisted, the anxiety was not so great as it had been in February and March. Three months had brought a great change in the disposition of forces inside Australia and even if an attack were now made deliberately and with greater strength, the forces in Australia would be far better prepared to meet it. On 10th January there were, in round figures, 38,000 members of the A.I.F., 214,000 of the A.M.F. and 50,700 men of the R.A.A.F. serving in Australia and only a few thousand of the United States Army. At the end of March, there were over 90,000 A.I.F., 273,000 A.M.F. (including nearly 10,000 members of the A.I.F. who were serving with them), about 60,000 of the R.A.A.F. and about 34,000 of the United States Army, including both air and ground strengths. A further 21,000 United States troops were due to arrive early in April. The United States naval forces originally allocated to the South-West Pacific Area were one cruiser, 8 destroyers and 25 submarines, and beyond them, in the British Eastern Fleet, were 5 battleships, 2 aircraft carriers, 16 cruisers and 28 destroyers. By 30th June the naval forces serving in Australian waters comprised four 8-inch cruisers (2 United States and 2 Australian), one 6-inch cruiser (Australian), 12 destroyers (9 United States and 3 Australian) and 31 United States submarines (11 at Brisbane and 20 at Fremantle).

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[1] See G. H. Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1942-1945* (1968). It was thought at the time that there were four midgets; only subsequent sorting of the confused activities of many people and craft and the numerous signals and sightings assessed the number at three.

[2] Telegram to Dominions Office, 25 Jun 1942.

During April, May and June there was steady reinforcement of the land forces, including further anti-aircraft units, aircraft and tanks and by the end of June the manpower under arms included 98,000 A.I.F., 311,000 A.M.F. (including 17,500 A.I.F. serving with them) and 88,000 United States Army (including about 30,000 in the Air Corps and anti-aircraft units), while the R.A.A.F. in Australia totalled 72,500. (There were still nearly 12,000 serving overseas.) Roughly half a million Australians were under arms.

Within a few days of his return to Australia in March, Blamey had presented proposals for the reorganisation of the Australian Army in Australia. The military aspects of this reorganisation are dealt with in another volume of this series.[3] The broad objects of the changes he made were, first to have a completely mobile force of one army corps in eastern Australia and one division in Western Australia; and, second, to secure a suitable distribution of protective troops in the various States and important localities within those States. The proposals were discussed with War Cabinet on 31st March, special reference being made by Blamey to the need for increasing the strength in Western Australia and Darwin, and were approved.[4]

An A.I.F. brigade group was dispatched to Darwin immediately, and with the two brigades already there was designated Northern Territory Force. Troops numbering 6,000 were transferred from Victoria to Western Australia to build up local forces to full division strength, and shortly afterwards, as a heartening token, the Western Australian battalion of the 6th Division was also transferred there. A First Army was created and located in Queensland and New South Wales; a Second Army in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania; and the fifth group was called New Guinea Force. In May, after the Coral Sea Battle, Blamey had sent a second infantry brigade to Papua. With the increased numbers it had been possible to strengthen the forces in the outlying States and territories without appreciably diminishing the strength retained in the eastern coastal region, the protection of which was still considered vital to the continuance of Australia in the war. On paper then Australia was being defended in May by the equivalent of 13 or 14 divisions. By June, the distribution of Australian infantry brigades and American infantry regiments was as follows—2 in New Guinea, 8 in Queensland, 15 in the south-eastern States, 3 in the Northern Territory and 3 in Western Australia. In addition, from 12th March 1942 there was an American division defending New Caledonia.

The standard of training and equipment of these forces is described in detail elsewhere.[5] For reasons there discussed, it would appear to have been, in length of training, equipment and leadership, a far better force than it was made out to be at the time by either the Australian Government or by MacArthur. In contemporary communications there was a

[3] See D. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year.*
[4] War Cabinet Minute 2053, on Agendum 186/1942, 31 Mar 1942.
[5] See McCarthy.

tendency to disparage it and to represent the A.I.F. divisions as the only effective fighting units. The indications are that the militia was grossly under-valued, as their performance later in the year was to demonstrate; the reason, so far as the Australian Government was concerned, would appear to have been in part a real doubt as to the mettle of the militia conscript and, more potent, an unwillingness to rate the militia too high because Australia was perpetually making out a case for reinforcements. MacArthur and his staff, pursuing their natural interest in building up the strength available to the command, were also disposed to represent publicly that the forces at their disposal were weaker than in fact they were. A further possible cause for under-valuing the troops may be found in the fact that the militia were not available for service outside Australian territory. They were technically home defence troops and the very term connotes a different standard from that of an expeditionary force. Only if the disparagement of the militia as "partially trained", "inefficient" and "badly equipped" is accepted can the urgent claims for the reinforcement of Australia be given the whole weight which the Australian Government gave to them. If the militia were given its due, Australia had a respectable force to reckon with any invasion force that Japan could have landed against it at that stage. The three militia brigades which fought later at Milne Bay, in the Owen Stanley Range and on the north coast of Papua showed that they were readier for action than the four American regiments that fought in Papua in 1942.

During the lull in enemy activities after the Battle of Midway, Blamey obtained the War Cabinet's approval on 30th June to a reorganisation of the Australian Military Forces into nine infantry divisions and three armoured divisions in place of ten infantry divisions, one armoured division and two motorised divisions.[6] The change reflects partly that more tanks were becoming available. It is also an indication that the role of a substantial part of this force was still seen as fighting on the Australian mainland and not in island jungles. The Allied air forces based on Australia had been carrying out regular strikes against the enemy. Except for the parties skirmishing round Lae and Salamaua and the small force waging guerilla war in Timor none of the Allied Land Forces in the South-West Pacific was yet at grips with the Japanese.

3—THE CLAIM FOR GREATER STRENGTH, JULY-OCTOBER 1942

On 20th July MacArthur moved his headquarters from Melbourne to Brisbane to be nearer the enemy.[7]

Early in July enemy cruisers and transports were sighted by aircraft at Guadalcanal in the Solomons and it was assumed that the Japanese were preparing a base there. At the end of the month it became known that

[6] War Cabinet Minute 2224, 30 Jun, on Agendum 281/1942.

[7] One of Brisbane's best-known hotels, Lennon's, was taken over for billeting of officers, and GHQ was established in the multi-storeyed A.M.P. Insurance building.

three or four heavy cruisers and three or four destroyers, with submarines, were in the New Guinea-Solomon Islands area. The Japanese landed a force at Gona on the north coast of New Guinea on 21st July and started to advance south-westward against the resistance of Australian troops. Further air attacks were made on Darwin, Townsville, Port Moresby and Port Hedland and enemy submarines were again operating off the east coast. On 1st August reports were received that an enemy naval force was concentrating at Surabaya, in Java.

The movement of the remainder of the 6th Division from Ceylon to Australia was completed in the first week of August. On the 1st August it was decided that the 7th Division A.I.F. should go to New Guinea, to reinforce the New Guinea Force of about 10,000 men, and the first elements left Brisbane on the 6th. About the same time it became known that there was a general movement of enemy naval forces towards the Solomon Islands and that the *XVII Japanese Army* headquarters had been established at Rabaul. The reassuring effects of the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway Island were wearing off and it was considered that a new Japanese offensive against Australia was being prepared.

While these developments were taking place, the Australian Government had also learnt of the view held in Washington that a Japanese attack on Siberia was impending.[8] They had also been continuing the discussion with the United Kingdom on questions related to the retention of the 9th Division in the Middle East, where it was now in action again, and the provision of reinforcements for it. In the course of that discussion the Australian Government received from the United Kingdom an appreciation by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on the situation in the Middle East and, in particular, the way in which the intention to build up strength in that region had been affected by the diversion to Malaya and India in December and January of three British divisions which would otherwise have been available for the Middle East; the withdrawal of two Australian divisions and one British division from the Middle East, and the holding in Burma, Malaya and India of other formations which had been intended to go to the Middle East. Among the conclusions reached by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff was that to withdraw the 9th Australian Division at this stage, or indeed at any time during 1942, would endanger the Allied position and vital Allied interests, while the transportation of the division to Australia and the transportation of another division to replace it in the Middle East would involve "an unjustifiable and dangerous shipping commitment".[9]

The future employment of the 9th Division was again discussed by the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council on 29th and 30th July against the background of renewed apprehension in the Pacific but before the full extent of the new disposition of Japanese forces in New Guinea and the Solomons was known. That discussion resulted in the dispatch to Churchill on 30th July of a telegram which, commenting on the review of the

[8] Telegram from Washington Legation, 24 Jul 1942.
[9] Telegram from Churchill, 24 Jul 1942.

Middle East situation, expressed disappointment that once again the possibilities in the Pacific, both in regard to offensive action by Japan and offensive action by the United Nations to defeat Japan, had been overlooked:

> Australia has been critically threatened on two occasions—firstly following the fall of the Malay Barrier, and secondly following the threatened advance through the Coral Sea. Japan is now consolidating her position in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and has made a landing in Papua which threatens our important advanced base at Port Moresby, which is vital to the defence of the north-eastern coast against enemy landings and the maintenance of the passage through Torres Strait for the supply of Darwin.
>
> It is imperative to force the enemy back to his bases in the mandated islands in the north-east and to drive him out of Timor in the north-west. The Government desires that the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area, shall have at his disposal for the defence of his base and for offensive operations in the Pacific all the Australian forces it can place at his disposal. Furthermore, superior sea power and air power are vital to wrest the initiative from Japan and are essential to assure the defensive position in the South-West Pacific Area.

The Government then proceeded to express its "willing agreement" to the "temporary retention of the 9th Division in the Middle East" on condition that the United Kingdom would give an assurance that its representatives in Washington would do their utmost to ensure the allotment of aircraft for the re-equipment of the R.A.A.F. to 73 squadrons by June 1943. They also added a cautionary word that reinforcements for the 9th Division would only provide enough for two and a half months on the intense scale of activity and the Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East would need to have this fact in mind in his use of the division. Curtin later explained to the Advisory War Council that the purpose of this warning was to ensure that the Australian decision to send reinforcements to the 9th Division was "not to be used as a lever to turn temporary retention of the division in the Middle East into permanent retention. In view of the manpower situation and the danger threatening Australia there was to be no departure from the principle that all the A.I.F. forces abroad should ultimately return to Australia to fight in this theatre."[1]

In order to appreciate Curtin's claim for the equipping of 73 squadrons of the R.A.A.F. and his willingness to delay the return of the 9th as a bargaining point for greater air strength it is necessary to make a brief digression to trace the development of ideas concerning the air defence of Australia—ideas which had been nurtured by the stories from Greece and Malaya of the deficiencies of aircraft and of the effectiveness of Japanese torpedo bombers against battleships, by the knowledge of the superiority of Japan in aircraft carriers in the South Pacific and by the experience of raids on Australian territory from February 1942 onwards. The digression will also illuminate the history of the development of Australian thinking on methods of defence and on the conduct of the war.

In 1940 it had been decided to expand the Home Defence Air Force

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 1009, 30 Jul; War Cabinet Minute 2287, 29 Jul; telegram Curtin to Churchill, 30 Jul.

from 19 squadrons to 32 squadrons, with ancillary units, 14 squadrons out of the total being planned as general-reconnaissance squadrons and 9 as general-purpose squadrons flying dive bombers. Up to the beginning of 1942, however, only 20 of these squadrons had been formed, the formation of the other 12 having been held up by the delay in the delivery of aircraft from overseas. Out of the 20 squadrons which had been formed, 3 had served in Malaya, one was serving in the Middle East and one in the United Kingdom.[2]

On 12th December 1941 the War Cabinet approved in principle the expansion of the air force to 60 squadrons, and on 18th February 1942 to 73 squadrons; but both decisions were "in principle" only and to enable planning to proceed, for the question whether or not the decisions could be made effective depended on the supply of aircraft—a matter which was beyond the control of Australia. This expansion to 73 squadrons was made conditional on the disposition of other Allied air units and if other air support became available the Australian commitment could be reduced accordingly.

On 2nd March 1942 the Minister for Air presented to the War Cabinet his detailed proposals for the expansion to 73 squadrons. In this new plan there were to be 24 fighter squadrons and 16 bomber squadrons (in place of 2 and 9 respectively) and only 11 general-reconnaissance squadrons (in place of 14), for the character of the strategic problem had completely changed. The estimated capital cost was £112,026,000, including aircraft, equipment, stores, ammunition, fuels, buildings and works, and it was estimated that the increase in numbers required for the additional 41 squadrons and ancillary units would be approximately 2,500 aircrew personnel (to be withdrawn from the Empire Air Training Scheme) and 38,000 ground staff.

The progressive increase in plans for air defence in the course of two years from 19 squadrons at the outbreak of war to 32, to 60 and now to 73 squadrons was an indication of the difficulty, even among those who urged the importance of air defence, of envisaging exactly the claims of this arm of the service. That difficulty was further indicated by the changes in the proportionate strength of reconnaissance squadrons, bomber squadrons, fighter squadrons and transport squadrons. Even assuming that the need for, say, 60 squadrons had been foreseen before the war, if such a force had been then provided mainly from aircraft suitable for reconnaissance it would not have been fully effective for the tasks of 1942.

The War Cabinet, on 2nd March, approved the proposals for expansion to 73 squadrons "to enable planning to be proceeded with" and at the same time set on foot inquiries from the manpower authorities on the possibilities of enlisting the 38,000 extra personnel required for ground staff, and from the procurement authorities regarding the availability of aircraft and probable dates of supply.[3] The intention to expand and the

[2] These 20 squadrons were, of course, Home Defence. In addition Australia had manned, some fully, some partly, nine EATS squadrons which were serving in Malaya, the Middle East and the United Kingdom.

[3] War Cabinet Minutes 1579, 12 Dec 1941; 1900, 18 Feb 1942; 1941, 2 Mar 1942. War Cabinet Agendum 113/1942, 22 Feb 1942.

voting of £112,000,000 meant little; the obtaining of men and machines meant much.

By June it had been decided, in view of the delays in obtaining aircraft, to plan for 45 squadrons by the end of 1942 and the other 28 by September 1943. Three months later ambition contracted to 35 squadrons equipped largely from America by April 1943, and an additional 16 equipped from local production by September 1944.[4] Subsequently, this was modified into plans for 45 squadrons equipped from both overseas and local production by the end of 1943 and expansion up to a total of 51 during 1944.[5]

A great deal of Evatt's energy during his mission abroad had been devoted to obtaining aircraft. The chief result had been an offer made at the end of June to send three Spitfire squadrons to Australia—two Australian squadrons formed in England under the Empire Air Training Scheme and one R.A.F. squadron. The offer was made on the personal responsibility of Churchill and, indeed, he incurred some criticism from the Americans for having disposed of portion of the common pool of aircraft without using the agreed machinery for aircraft assignments. The idea was Churchill's own and he intended it to be over and above any routine assignment of aircraft to Australia, regarding it as "an expression of mutual support which should bind together the countries of the Empire and go some way towards repaying for the sacrifices made by Australia in the imperial cause". Shortly after the shipment of the first aircraft to Australia, however, the situation in the Middle East suddenly became worse and Churchill asked that the aircraft might be landed at Freetown and flown to Egypt as this was the only possible means of providing early reinforcements. The Australian Government agreed very unwillingly and after protests to Churchill, and struck a bargain that, in addition to the initial quota of 48 aircraft, the 15 machines a month, with spares, which Churchill had undertaken to provide, should be reckoned as from the date of the departure of the squadrons from England so that Australia would not lose any aircraft as a result of the delay.[6] By this means, wastage of the squadrons not having commenced, Australia began to accumulate additional claims to Spitfire aircraft. There were, however, further delays in the delivery of the Spitfires[7] and the regular allocation of aircraft to Australia gave little chance of expansion.

In reply to the Australian request of 30th July 1942 for assistance in equipping 73 squadrons as one of the conditions of leaving the 9th Division in the Middle East, Churchill referred to the assurances that had been given by the United States Chiefs of Staff that adequate measures would be taken to ensure the safety of Australia and stated that as soon as strategic requirements were defined they would be presented to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, on which body the United Kingdom representatives had instructions to ensure that the interests of the Dominions were

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1074, 24 Sep, and War Cabinet Agendum 420/1942, 22 Oct 1942.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 2686, 2 Mar 1943.
[6] War Cabinet Minute 2214, 30 Jun, and Advisory War Council Minute 975, 1 Jul 1942.
[7] Telegram from Dominions Office, 27 Jul 1942.

adequately safeguarded.[8] The decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington was to equip and provide for the maintenance of a total of 30 squadrons for the R.A.A.F. by April 1943, including the three Spitfire squadrons given by Churchill. A proposal was also made that aircraft might be transferred from the United States Army Air Force in order to equip and maintain at least 10 additional squadrons for the R.A.A.F. but that the United States Air Force personnel thus freed for other service would be withdrawn from Australia.[9]

Curtin protested to Churchill against either withdrawing American forces from Australia or including the special gift of Spitfires in the Australian allotment.[1] Before war broke out, he said, Australia had planned to provide 32 squadrons for home defence but was limited by lack of aircraft. Now, after continuous representations, they would not reach a total of 30 squadrons until April 1943.

> We feel (he said) that we are entitled to assistance in the development of the maximum forces which we are capable of raising. Our advisers state that without adequate naval and air support, which at present deters aggression and maintains our communications with overseas sources of supply, these forces would be inadequate for the defence of Australia. The Government considers that the Australian people, who have cooperated in other theatres at considerable loss to their forces, and who are still doing so on land, sea and in the air, can rightly claim this degree of reinsurance on which they would have to rely in the event of the temporary or permanent loss of command of the sea by the United Nations.
>
> The small strength that is being made available does not assure even the defence of Australia as a base. The Government is seriously concerned about the whole position and requests your immediate intervention with the President for the purpose of equipping Australian personnel without any corresponding withdrawal of existing air strength in this theatre of war.[2]

Other documents, and particularly instructions sent to the Australian Minister at Washington on 12th August for supporting the case made to the Combined Chiefs of Staff[3] indicate that the total plan was for 135 Allied squadrons, of which 71[4] would be provided by the R.A.A.F., for the defence of Australia and to provide a striking force.

The representations to Churchill and similar representations to Roosevelt did not change the decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.[5] Churchill pointed out that the plans of the Chiefs of Staff provided for a combined strength of over 1,100 aircraft in Australia by 1st April 1943, and this should be adequate for the defence of Australia, especially as another 1,000 aircraft were to be provided for New Zealand and the South Pacific islands. The best the United Kingdom could do was to try to ensure

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[8] Telegram from Dominions Office, 6 Aug 1942.

[9] Telegram from Washington Legation, 20 Aug 1942.

[1] Later, on representations from Bruce that the offer of three Spitfire squadrons had been made spontaneously by Churchill without consulting the Americans, who showed "a surprising amount of resentment" that the allocation had not gone through the Munitions Assignment Board, the Australian Government did not press Churchill on this point, leaving it to him to fulfil his intention that the three squadrons were an additional gift. (Telegram from Bruce, 1 Sep, and to Bruce, 5 Sep 1942.)

[2] Telegram to Dominions Office, 25 Aug; repeated to Washington.

[3] Telegram to Washington, 12 Aug 1942.

[4] Plus 2 serving overseas brings total to 73 quoted elsewhere.

[5] Telegram from Washington, 9 Sep 1942.

that the R.A.A.F. had a fair share of the 1,100.[6] Roosevelt simply said that he agreed with the conclusions of the Combined Chiefs of Staff that Australia's present armed forces, assuming that they were fully equipped and effectively trained, were sufficient to defeat the present Japanese force in New Guinea and to provide for the security of Australia against an invasion on the scale that the Japanese were capable of launching at present or in the immediate future.[7]

In this as in other exchanges both Churchill and Roosevelt, influenced doubtless by their own conception of the part of the Pacific theatre in the grand strategy, interpreted the Australian claim as one concerned only with the defence of Australia and did not reply to any arguments related to the development of an offensive based on Australia. Meanwhile, on 25th August, the Australian Government had renewed its representations for the concentration of a superior naval force in the Pacific and at the same time was preparing a case for land reinforcements in Australia.

On sea and land and in the air Japanese forces were now being more heavily engaged. On 7th August United States Marines had landed on Guadalcanal, in the Solomons, where the Japanese had established themselves. In operations off Savo Island in the Solomons on 9th August the Australian cruiser *Canberra* and the United States heavy cruisers *Quincy*, *Vincennes* and *Astoria* had been lost. On the 24th in a battle in the eastern Solomons the Japanese lost the light carrier *Ryujo*. While the fight for Guadalcanal was still in full fury the Japanese landed at Milne Bay, at the south-eastern corner of New Guinea and there at the hands of the Australians suffered their first land defeat of the war. The 16th Brigade from the 6th Division A.I.F. was moved to New Guinea on 13th September.

In a request to Churchill for naval reinforcements on 25th August, Curtin said that the naval engagement of the 8th and 9th in the Solomons, following those in the Coral Sea and Midway, showed that operations in the Pacific were leading to a naval clash which might be decisive in this theatre. He claimed that in April[8] the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff agreed that, when the moment was opportune, the naval forces of the United Nations should take the strategic offensive in the Pacific but that transfer of forces from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific for this purpose would not be possible until—

(*a*) a certain minimum defensive strength had been built up in the Indian Ocean area;
(*b*) Pacific bases were strong enough to stand without immediate support from the Fleet;
(*c*) the United States Pacific Fleet had regained strength comparable with that of Japan, so that with reinforcements from Britain it would enjoy decisive superiority over the Japanese; and
(*d*) such time as the necessary land and air forces, equipment and shipping

[6] Telegram from Dominions Office, 2 Sep 1942.
[7] Telegram from Washington, 16 Sep 1942.
[8] Telegram from Dominions Office, 6 Apr 1942.

were ready so that, with the help of a superior fleet, the Allies could seize and secure such territory as would in time threaten vital Japanese interests.

Curtin asked what were the present views of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on these conditions and what were the present plans and prospects for the concentration of a superior naval force in the Pacific.[9]

The thoughts that had been in Curtin's mind were perhaps most clearly expounded in a communication to Bruce—dispatched after the second engagement in the Solomons—asking him to advance the view that the time had arrived for a concentration of a superior naval force in the Pacific:

The strategical basis of the defence of British territories in the Eastern hemisphere against attack by Japan was originally stated to be an adequate fleet based on Singapore (Curtin said). The Service advisers of the Australian Government, the appreciations of the Chiefs of Staff of the United Kingdom and the views of the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area, all still agree that the main deterrent to large-scale aggression against territories such as Australia is sea power, with the necessary ancillary air power. Instead of a British fleet based on Singapore, the potential deterrent is at present provided by an American fleet based on Hawaii, though the Eastern Fleet in the Indian Ocean and certain United States units based on Fremantle provide a certain degree of cover against a large-scale attack on Western Australia. The island territories captured by the Japanese enable them to work on well-protected interior lines of communication and under air cover of land-based aircraft as far south as the Solomon Islands. To combat them in this southern area, it is necessary for the United States to dispatch task forces from their main fleet and base at Hawaii. Following the recent American landing at the Solomon Islands, in which we suffered severe naval losses, Japan is concentrating stronger naval forces, which are being countered by corresponding American concentration. Both sides appear fairly evenly balanced, and it is not improbable that our fate in the Pacific may be decided by an early naval engagement. With such great issues at stake we feel that with the superior naval strength of the United Nations there should be no uncertainty about our ability to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy. In fact, from the aspect of grand strategy, the importance of doing so should be an agreed objective of cardinal importance. Japan has already launched one counter-offensive against the Solomons and has continued her gradual advance along the northern shore of New Guinea, until we now face each other in Milne Bay. It is evident from the information in intelligence reports relating to concentrations in the South Pacific that Japan intends to wage an intense offensive in this region.[1]

Apart from his direct inquiry of the United Kingdom about the possibility of the transfer of the British Eastern Fleet to the Pacific, Curtin also placed before Roosevelt his views on "the situation and needs of the South-West Pacific Area and their relation to the global strategy which Mr Churchill, yourself and the Combined Chiefs of Staff have constantly under review". He disposed of the rest of East Asia and the Pacific by saying that the best way to help China was to attack Japan where she was most vulnerable and that it appeared that Japan had no intention of attacking Siberia for the time being but was making concentrations in the South-West Pacific Area. He continued:

[9] Telegram to Dominions Office, 25 Aug 1942.
[1] Telegram to Bruce, 31 Aug 1942.

The principles of Imperial Defence, on which Australia has for years based its defence policy of Empire cooperation and local defence, contemplated that a British Fleet based on Singapore would afford a general deterrent to large-scale aggression against British possessions in the Eastern Hemisphere. The Australian people have gratefully learnt by anxious experience that the American Fleet based on Hawaii has exercised a similar deterrent effect on Japan. Also that your task forces, with which it has been the privilege of the sadly-diminished Australian Navy to serve, have in actions, such as the Coral Sea, frustrated the attempts of the enemy to extend his southern advance, imperil the line of communication between the United States and Australia, and further threaten the mainland of the Commonwealth.

In the absence of knowledge of what is contemplated in the South-West Pacific Area in the general scheme of global strategy, we feel apprehensive regarding the capacity of the forces assigned to the South-West Pacific Area to ensure the security of Australia as a base. You will realise that so much is dependent on the strength of naval task forces that operate in or near this area, and the continued flow of land and air forces with the necessary aircraft and equipment. We consider it should be a cardinal objective of grand strategy to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy, in order to throw him back in the first place on to his bases in the mandated islands. For this, superior sea power and ancillary air forces are necessary. . . . Naval and air strength are vital to the maintenance and reinforcement of land and air forces at Port Moresby and Milne Bay in New Guinea, where there are now nearly two divisions of troops and several squadrons of air forces.

Curtin then gave Roosevelt a copy of his request to Churchill for the concentration of a superior naval force in the Pacific; and advanced his case for the allotment of more aircraft to the R.A.A.F. without the withdrawal from Australia of any American air strength. He mentioned gratefully the presence of 98,000 American troops in Australia but did not make any specific request for more troops, although reminding the President that "Australia's capacity to help herself has been limited by the fact that 48,000 men are still serving overseas and our casualties in dead, missing and prisoners of war total 37,000 or an aggregate of 85,000". After repeating his opinion that Japan intended to wage an intensive offensive, he concluded:

We feel, with the superior strength of the United Nations, that there should be no uncertainty about our ability to inflict a decisive defeat on the enemy. In fact, from the aspect of grand strategy, the importance of doing so should be an agreed objective of the first priority. I would commend to the earnest consideration of yourself and your advisers, the statement of the position as I see it in the South-West Pacific Area and the vital needs for which provision should be made, if we are not going to run the risk of irreparable damage to our defensive position and our ultimate capacity to defeat Japan.

Much as I would like to discuss these matters with you personally, I feel that the threatening dangers of the position in the South-West Pacific Area do not warrant my leaving Australia, nor my absence from my post as Prime Minister, under such critical conditions.[2]

A copy of this communication was sent to Churchill with a renewed plea for adequate forces "to safeguard the defence of Australia and the adjacent islands" and an assertion of Curtin's belief that the South-West

[2] Telegram to Washington, 31 Aug 1942.

and South Pacific Areas were to be Japan's main front for the immediate future.[3]

These messages were in keeping with advice that MacArthur was giving at the same time and reflect the concert of opinion of the Prime Minister and the Supreme Commander. On 30th August MacArthur had sent a wireless message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff: "Unless the strategic situation is constantly reviewed in the light of current enemy potentialities in the Pacific and unless moves are made to meet the changing conditions, a disastrous outcome is bound to result shortly; it is no longer a question here of preparing a projected offensive; without additional naval forces, either British or American, and unless steps are taken to match the heavy air and ground forces the enemy is assembling, I predict the development shortly of a situation similar to those that have successfully overwhelmed our forces in the Pacific since the beginning of the war."

On 3rd September,[4] Australia learnt that the United Kingdom would be reluctant to intervene in the allocation of aircraft, although a telegram received from Bruce on the same day held out some hope that this might not be Churchill's last word.[5] On the 9th the Government learnt that Churchill, after consulting the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, thought that it was not yet opportune to transfer British naval forces from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. It was thought that, although the recent American offensive in the Solomons would do much to contain the Japanese in the Pacific, a Japanese incursion into the Indian Ocean, even if only as a diversion, could not be ruled out and the British land, air and sea strength in the Indian Ocean had not yet been raised to the necessary minimum because its expected reinforcements had been sent elsewhere.[6] Bruce reported that there had been an exhaustive examination and discussion of the whole subject and he saw no chance of altering the views of the Chiefs of Staff.[7] On the next day they learnt that the Combined Chiefs of Staff would not vary the allocation of aircraft.

On the 11th Australia presented a strong case to Roosevelt for land reinforcements for Australia in the shape of three American divisions. In spite of the arguments used for such reinforcements it would be incorrect to say that Australia asked for land reinforcements because of the failure to obtain a concentration of naval forces in the Pacific. The draft cablegram to Roosevelt making the request had been prepared and discussed by the War Cabinet, consequential on discussions between Curtin and Blamey and communications with MacArthur, before Churchill's reply regarding the Eastern Fleet had been received.[8] As early as 27th February 1942 the Australian Chiefs of Staff had estimated that, until such time as adequate naval and air forces were available, it would require a

[3] Telegram to Churchill, 31 Aug 1942.
[4] Telegram from Dominions Office, 2 Sep 1942.
[5] Telegram from Bruce, 2 Sep 1942.
[6] Telegram from Dominions Office, 8 Sep 1942.
[7] Telegram from Bruce, 8 Sep 1942.
[8] War Cabinet Minute 2356, 8 Sep; Advisory War Council Minute 1053, 9 Sep 1942.

minimum of 25 divisions to defend Australia against the scale of attack that was then considered possible; and Blamey had reaffirmed this estimate in a submission to the Minister for the Army on 2nd September.[9] Australia had intended all along to ask for land reinforcements as well as a concentration of naval forces and for more aircraft. The British reply regarding the Eastern Fleet became an added argument to support a request for three American divisions and for aircraft.

In reply to Churchill, on 11th September, Curtin expressed surprise to learn that instead of the Eastern Fleet being built up for the purposes of an eventual strategic offensive it was being disposed in theatres other than the Indian and Pacific Oceans.[1] If a superior naval force was not to be concentrated "to inflict a decisive defeat in Japan and relieve Australia of the threat of invasion", Curtin continued, Australia must press for land and air strength for local defence, just as the United Kingdom thought that India had to be strengthened. Then he threw some doubt on the capacity of widely-separated naval forces in the Pacific and Indian Oceans to defend Australia. The United States Fleet might maintain the security of the line of communications from the United States to Australia but Japan could launch an assault on the mainland of Australia without even interrupting this line. If Japan captured Port Moresby the way would be open for a direct attack on the mainland under cover of land-based aircraft and such an attack might well defy all Allied naval attempts to interrupt the Japanese line of communications or to dislodge the invaders.

As for the Indian Ocean, Curtin, changing somewhat the interpretation of the situation on which he had based his case for a transference of forces to the Pacific, asked:

> In view of the possibility that an attack may be launched against Western Australia by Japanese forces from the Netherlands East Indies, I would also be glad to know the views of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on the contemplated strength of the Eastern Fleet as a deterrent to such an attack, and the possibility of its use should such an attack eventuate, having regard to its other commitments in the Indian Ocean.[2]

This telegram was dispatched to Roosevelt for his information and on the same day Curtin sent the telegram mentioned above asking for an additional army corps of three divisions "for the defence of Australia as a base under existing conditions". It was impossible to withdraw the 9th Division from the Middle East, although the need for it in Australia was great, and it would be better to meet the need for land forces in the South-West Pacific Area by sending additional forces from the United States of America. He asked the President to consider this need at the same time as he was reviewing Curtin's earlier observations on the situation in the South-West Pacific.[3]

In being informed of this action Bruce was also instructed to press

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[9] See below, pp. 194-5.

[1] This statement by Curtin was an exaggeration of the terms of the British reply.

[2] Telegram to Dominions Office, 11 Sep 1942.

[3] Telegram to Washington Legation, 11 Sep 1942.

for more aircraft and an increase in land forces,[4] and Churchill was asked that the British representatives on the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee might support it.[5]

Roosevelt's reply was received on the 17th. He referred to Churchill's message about the Eastern Fleet (which had been communicated to Australia as a British view), as being a decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and continued that, as the reinforcement by the British of the United States Pacific Fleet was precluded at present and as the United States Pacific Fleet was unable to provide a superior naval force solely concerned with the defence of Australia and New Zealand, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had carefully considered the necessity for and the possibility of increasing the ground and air forces required for the territorial defence of Australia.

Roosevelt saw shipping as the key to operations in the Pacific. It was estimated that Japan had a maximum of 700,000 tons of shipping available for employment in large-scale military operations and that this shipping could support about 200,000 troops. Attacks by United States naval forces against the Japanese lines of communication, striking at merchant shipping as well as naval units, were planned on an ever-increasing scale and, if air forces in the South-West Pacific Area were similarly concentrated on Japanese shipping, the extent to which the Japanese could engage in or maintain operations in the South-West Pacific Area would be continually decreasing.

After considering all of the factors involved (the President continued) I agree with the conclusions of the Combined Chiefs of Staff that your present armed forces, assuming that they are fully equipped and effectively trained, are sufficient to defeat the present Japanese force in New Guinea and to provide for the security of Australia against an invasion on the scale that the Japanese are capable of launching at this time or in the immediate future.

The present operations in the Solomons area are designed to strengthen our position in lines of communication leading to Australia and therefore, if successful, should contribute to its security. Projected reinforcements for these operations will further strengthen the Allied position in the South-West Pacific and will create favourable conditions for more extensive operations against the enemy as appropriate means become available.

Present commitments of shipping are such that it is not possible to move additional troops to Australia now or in the immediate future. Every effort is being made to ensure uninterrupted flow of supplies, equipment and forces committed to your area, and I can assure you that it will be my personal obligation that these commitments will be fulfilled to alleviate the present position. I regret that my reply cannot be more favourable. However, I am confident that you appreciate fully the necessity of rigidly pursuing our overall strategy that envisages the early and decisive defeat of Germany in order that we can quickly undertake an all-out effort in the Pacific.[6]

In advancing the Australian claim, discussion had ranged over wide fields of military strategy and the reasons why it would be better to do this or that had been urged on various military grounds but, in reviewing

[4] Telegram to Bruce, 11 Sep 1942.
[5] Telegram to Churchill, 11 Sep 1942.
[6] Telegram from Washington, 16 Sep 1942.

the course of his advocacy and the arguments brought against him, Bruce came to the core of the matter when he said that the governing principle behind all the arguments he had heard in London was the basic strategic policy which had been laid down by Churchill and Roosevelt in December 1941:

> That principle we might have fought successfully when it was arrived at last December if we had known of it at the time. Now it is almost hopeless to get it reversed. Applying that principle it is contended that the diversions we asked for would interfere with the operational plans that are now being undertaken to give effect to the basic strategy and such diversions would only be justified if they were necessary for the defence of Australia. It is contended that there is no such necessity.[7]

A little earlier, in a speech in the House, Evatt had stated the most persuasive case against the rigid application of the Roosevelt-Churchill "grand strategy". "As the Australian Prime Minister conveniently described it, the agreed strategy in relation to the South-West Pacific was primarily of a defensive or holding character, the defensive to be followed by offensive action at a later stage. But it is clear that the strategical arrangements were provisional only. Plans of such a character have to be modified, contracted or expanded according to the changing developments of a world war. For instance, strategic arrangements made [in January 1942], before Japan's thrusts had gathered their subsequent momentum, were not necessarily applicable to the situation in April, still less to that in September [1942]."

At that time, too, Evatt appeared to realise what Curtin may not yet have seen: that it was not only a case of pressing the claims of the Pacific against the claims of the Atlantic and Europe but also of pressing the claims of the South-West Pacific Area against the other two Pacific theatres. He made a local application of the "global strategy" argument when he said: "As Japan regards the Pacific as one great theatre of war, so must the United Nations."[8]

Before discussing extensively the failure of the Australian representations, the War Cabinet called for a new appreciation of the Australian defence position and the strength of forces required and, to this end, referred to the Australian Chiefs of Staff a summarised account of the whole series of exchanges with the United Kingdom and the United States.

The appreciation by the Australian Chiefs of Staff, dated 30th September 1942, contains the material and affords a convenient opportunity for a conspectus of the Pacific situation.

The Chiefs of Staff described the main features of the situation in September 1942, as contrasted with that in February 1942, as follows:

(*a*) With the collapse of the Philippines, Malaya, Burma and the Netherlands East Indies, the concentration of the Japanese Navy, together with commensurate ground and air forces, has, for the first time, moved towards the

[7] Telegram from Bruce, 18 Sep 1942.

[8] Speech on his mission abroad, 3rd September 1942. *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 172, pp. 78-84.

South-West and South Pacific Areas. The centre of gravity of this concentration is in the general Rabaul-Truk area. Whilst the mass of the enemy's troops are concentrated in the north, e.g., China, Manchukuo, etc., many of his shock units are being moved forward to Rabaul.

(*b*) Apart from the increased enemy concentration mentioned above, the naval position in the Pacific since the battle of Midway (4th June) has changed for the better, and Allied naval strength in the Pacific is now approximately equal to the Japanese. The exact disposition and strength of United States naval forces in any particular area is not known, but it is assumed that this will be determined, as far as possible, by the anticipated strength of the enemy in that area.

(*c*) New Caledonia and New Hebrides are strongly held by United States Forces.

(*d*) United States forces have occupied certain islands in the Solomons group. As expected, this has caused the Japanese to send a large force of ships, including men-of-war, transports and supply ships, to this area, at a great distance from Japan, thereby extending very considerably their line of communication and exposing their ships to attack by Allied naval and air forces along this line and ultimately in an area chosen by us.

(*e*) In New Guinea, Port Moresby has been reinforced by land and air forces and Milne Bay has been occupied. The Japanese have occupied areas on the north coast of New Guinea opposite to Port Moresby, whence they have advanced through the Owen Stanley Ranges to within about 40 miles of Port Moresby. There they are meeting with determined and successful opposition.

(*f*) Transfer of the Sixth and Seventh Divisions of the A.I.F. from the Middle East has been completed. Of these, the Seventh Division and part of the Sixth Division A.I.F., with two Brigade Groups, A.M.F., are engaged in the operations in New Guinea. Two United States Divisions have continued their training in Australia and one of these is also moving to New Guinea. The Ninth Division A.I.F. has moved from Syria and is now engaged in active operations in the Western Desert.

(*g*) The whole Army Forces in Australia have become a more effective fighting force by reason of increases in equipment and the further period of training.

(*h*) The strength of the Allied Air Forces in Australia has been substantially increased and our relative air position vis-à-vis the enemy in areas adjacent to Australia is, on the whole, substantially more favourable than in June. This is due to:

(i) Additional aircraft. There are now in Australia and New Guinea approximately 1,100 operational aircraft, but this total includes about 200 aircraft of obsolescent types similar to those used for training purposes. The Japanese strength in New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Timor, Ambon and the Celebes Islands is estimated to be about 400 land-based and 100 carrier-borne aircraft.

(ii) Development of more advanced bases.

(iii) Improved means of long range warning and fighter control organisation.[9]

The Chiefs of Staff thought the next Japanese move would be a determined attempt to regain control in the Solomons, while at the same time continuing their operations in New Guinea with a view to capturing Port Moresby. A diversionary attack on the north-west coast of Australia was a possibility but so long as the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia and Port Moresby were held, an invasion of the east coast of Australia was unlikely. As the forces assigned to the South-West Pacific Area were not big enough for major offensive operations, the courses of action open to

[9] War Cabinet Agendum 404/1942.

Australia were to defend the mainland and to undertake a limited attack to clear the enemy from bases from which he could launch attacks on Australia or interfere with the lines of communication. The extent of this limited offensive would be governed by the size and nature of the forces available and, having considered these, the Chiefs of Staff thought that the main objects should be:

(*a*) To hold Port Moresby and Milne Bay and to drive the Japanese from the mainland of New Guinea by the capture of enemy bases on the north coast successively.
(*b*) To drive the Japanese out of the Solomon Islands and secure these as bases for future offensive operations.
(*c*) To maintain naval and air attack on the enemy's lines of communication between Japan and New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.
(*d*) To attack Japanese naval forces whenever a favourable opportunity occurs.
(*e*) To maintain our present tactics in Timor.

In considering what forces were available, the Chiefs of Staff had necessarily raised again the question of the return of the 9th Division and the continuance of the Empire Air Training Scheme. The number required for the existing Order of Battle of the Australian Army was 541,000 men. The actual strength was 485,000, and it was considered that a further 34,000 might be obtained by a further review of Classes I to IV, who had already been called up under the *Defence Act,* and by increased enlistment of women. This left a deficiency of 22,000. Moreover, to maintain the army, an intake of 7,000 to 8,000 men a month would be required, but only 1,100 a month would be available from youths turning 18 years of age. Furthermore, the forces in New Guinea were operating under extreme tropical conditions that would result in heavy wastage of personnel and the 9th Division in the Middle East was engaged in active operations and would require considerable reinforcements to maintain it. There were increasing commitments for coast defence and anti-aircraft defence at new naval and air bases established in Australia.

An army force of a minimum strength of five divisions would be needed in New Guinea. When reorganisation had been completed there would be only six Australian divisions on the mainland of Australia and three light armoured divisions in process of formation and it would not be possible to send to New Guinea any further Australian formations, owing to the dangerously depleted strength of the forces available for the defence of the mainland. Even to maintain the formations already in New Guinea the army's resources of manpower would be taxed to the utmost.

From this survey the conclusion was reached, not that the 9th Division was urgently needed in Australia, but that it could not be maintained abroad. "It follows," the appreciation read, "that reinforcements for the 9th Division in the Middle East will not be available in the numbers required, and that, unless the division returns to Australia it cannot be maintained, and it will in a few months cease to be a fully effective fighting unit, whereas it can be built up again in Australia by the allocation of personnel of other formations being abandoned."

Regarding the Empire Air Training Scheme, it was observed that the

present strength of the R.A.A.F. was about 100,000 of whom about 12,500 were serving overseas; that the plans for development to 51 squadrons by September 1944 and the continuance of the Empire Air Training Scheme would require an annual intake of 17,600 aircrew trainees; and that this could be reduced to 6,400 a year if the transfer of personnel overseas under the Empire Air Training Scheme were discontinued. Apart from the saving of manpower in Australia, however, the discontinuance of the scheme would result in the waste of a large training organisation and in a serious interruption to the output of trained aircrew for manning aircraft in operational theatres overseas. It would be a matter "of the gravest concern" to discontinue the scheme in order to make men available for the army.[1]

When MacArthur was given the opportunity of commenting on this appreciation he made the points that the measuring of military strength by numbers might be misleading and that the actual combat forces in the army were strictly limited;[2] and the further point that the defence of the Australian continent had been over-emphasised and that the successful defence of Australia must be waged "on the outer perimeter territories rather than within the area that is to be defended".

He also wrote to Curtin:

> With regard to the local situation, which is probably your immediate interest rather than questions of future grand strategy, I look with apprehension upon the growing shrinkage in army combat troops. I believe that vigorous action should be taken to maintain the number, the strength and the efficiency of the divisions that were projected six months ago and feel most earnestly that the time has come for the Ninth Division to be returned to Australia. A period of relative inaction has settled upon the Middle East and the crisis there has materially diminished. Ample time has been given to the Allies to build up the reinforcements necessary for General Alexander's[3] forces. It is evident from Mr Churchill's statements that little can be expected from English support of this area, and the concept that the 9th Division's presence in Egypt would be offset by British or other naval reinforcements no longer exists.[4]

When the appreciation came before the War Cabinet on 14th October and the Advisory War Council on 15th October, discussion centred chiefly on the return of the 9th Division, the Empire Air Training Scheme and the minimum forces necessary to ensure the defence of the mainland of Australia. It was agreed that the Government should request the early return of the 9th Division and cancel the approval previously given for the despatch of 6,113 reinforcements to the Middle East; and that "Australia should continue to participate in the Empire Air Training Scheme to the extent that this may be practicable, having regard to the total manpower position in Australia and subject to the maintenance of a regulated inward flow of Australian aircrew with war experience, in

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[1] War Cabinet Agendum 404/1942.

[2] The Australian Army contained 27 infantry brigades in October 1942; of these 4 were in New South Wales; 5 in Western Australia; 3 in Northern Territory; 4 in Queensland; 7 in New Guinea; 3 in the Middle East and 1 in Tasmania. Two brigades had been lost at Singapore.

[3] Field Marshal Rt Hon Earl Alexander, KG, GCB, OM, GCMG, CSI, DSO, MC. GOC-in-C Sthn Comd 1940-42; GOC Burma 1942; C-in-C ME 1942-43; Supreme Cdr Mediterranean Theatre 1944-45. Governor-General of Canada 1946-52. B. 10 Dec 1891. Died 16 Jun 1969.

[4] Letter from MacArthur to Curtin, 6 Oct 1942.

order to provide an experienced nucleus of pilots and aircrew in all R.A.A.F. units based on Australia".[5] In the Advisory War Council Menzies, while not dissenting, expressed the view that it was a far more rational course to send troops to Australia from an inactive theatre, such as the United States, than to transfer them from one active theatre (the Middle East) to another active theatre (Australia). This was wasteful of shipping and escorts.

The question of the minimum strength of the forces necessary to ensure the defence of vital areas on the mainland of Australia was referred by the War Cabinet to the Chiefs of Staff for further report. The sort of ideas that were probably in the minds of Ministers when they made this request are indicated by some notes prepared for Curtin's use at the meeting of 14th October. These notes contrasted the view of MacArthur that the enemy should be fought in New Guinea rather than on the mainland with a view which had been expressed by Blamey on another occasion that, if the United Nations suffered naval losses in the Pacific and were unable to dispose their naval and air forces in sufficient strength to prevent an invasion, the Japanese would probably bypass the concentration of Australian and American forces to the north of Australia and attack nearer to the main centres of population in the south. The notes pointed out that in such circumstances Australia would not have sufficient shipping resources to evacuate its land forces marooned in New Guinea. The concentration of forces in New Guinea should not be carried out to such an extent as to imperil the security of vital areas on the mainland, the maintenance of whose integrity was essential to continued Australian resistance.

The Chiefs of Staff, when they furnished their report on the minimum strength of forces to ensure the defence of vital areas, pointedly distinguished between the situation actually existing in the Pacific and "the situation envisaged by the War Cabinet". Looking at the first, they compared the Allied and the Japanese forces in the South-West and South Pacific Areas[6] and reached the conclusion that before an invasion of Australia by the Japanese would become likely it would be necessary for Japan to achieve a decisive naval victory, to recapture those parts of the Solomon Islands at present occupied by United States forces, to capture New Caledonia and the New Hebrides, and possibly to capture New

[5] War Cabinet Minutes 2428, 14 Oct and 2446, 15 Oct; and Advisory War Council Minute 1087, 15 Oct 1942.

[6] The figures given in the report, accompanied by the caution that they were based upon the Intelligence available and must be regarded as approximate, were—

Naval—battleships, Allied 2 (Japanese 3); battle cruisers, nil (3); aircraft carriers, 1 (one small); converted aircraft carriers 1 (2); heavy cruisers 6 (4); light cruisers 9 (6); destroyers 38 (37); submarines 30 (22); seaplane tenders 4 (11). Naval forces operating from Western Australia were not included.

Army—In New Guinea, three Allied divisions and two brigade groups faced 7,000 Japanese troops. There were 75,000 Japanese troops in New Britain and the Solomon Islands and the Allies had two divisions in the Solomon Islands and two divisions in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. In Australia there were seven infantry divisions and one brigade group and three armoured divisions in process of formation. The Japanese had 5,500 troops in Timor. Coast and anti-aircraft defences were manned by 5,650 men in New Guinea and 38,150 in Australia. The strength of Allied land-based aircraft was 791 in the South-West Pacific Area and 400 in the South Pacific Area, compared with 402 Japanese land-based aircraft: in Ambon (32), Celebes (68), Bali (12), Timor (25), New Britain (134), Bougainville (63) and the Solomons (68). Allied Army and Air Forces in New Zealand and Fiji were not included.

Guinea. The least forces the Japanese would be likely to use for an attempted invasion of Australia would be in the region of three to four divisions, with the necessary equipment, together with one month's stores and such a force would require up to 40 or 50 ships for its passage and an additional 100,000 tons of shipping a month to maintain itself in an enemy country. The assembly of such a force would presumably take place in the New Guinea-Solomons area, and Allied air reconnaissance would be likely to detect such a concentration of shipping and provide warning of its movements. Unless the Japanese had captured New Guinea, the assembly would probably take place partly at Rabaul and partly in the Solomons. The passage from Rabaul to, say, the Brisbane area at a speed of twelve knots would take five or six days and the position and course of the convoy should be known to the Allied forces throughout the passage and there should be a reasonable indication of the threatened area about 36 to 48 hours before the actual attack would take place. Notwithstanding a major naval defeat, it would be possible for the United Nations to dispose light forces including submarines in sufficient strength to be able to intercept and attack the enemy's invasion force by day and night. It would also be possible to concentrate land-based aircraft in considerable strength in time to make a series of attacks on the enemy forces during their approach and disembarkation. Such a force would therefore have to accept considerable risks and would suffer severe losses during the approach to our coast and the subsequent disembarkation, both from air and naval attack.

The conclusion to which this led the Chiefs of Staff was that the Allied forces should continue to carry out offensive operations with limited objectives, with the object of clearing the enemy out of bases from which he could launch attacks against Australia and interfere with Allied lines of communication.

As for "the situation envisaged by the War Cabinet", the Chiefs of Staff described their task in this case as being the examination of "what is possible rather than what we consider likely". Assuming that the enemy could invade Australia at any point he chose and that it was necessary to dispose forces on the mainland in strengths adequate to resist invasion in any area likely to be attacked, they repeated the old estimate of an army of 25 divisions and an air force of 71 squadrons.[7]

It is reasonably clear that the War Cabinet had been hoping for a report which would support the arguments they had based on the probability of an invasion of the Australian mainland. The consideration of the report by the Chiefs of Staff was delayed until 8th December, when its conclusions were simply "noted".[8]

In the meantime, Curtin had conveyed to both Churchill and Roosevelt, on 17th October, the substance of the earlier appreciation of the Chiefs of Staff and the request for the return of the 9th Division.[9] Bruce was

[7] That is, excluding two serving overseas. War Cabinet Agendum 404/1942, Supplement No. 1, 23 Nov 1942.

[8] Advisory War Council Minute 1107, 8 Dec 1942.

[9] Telegram to Dominions Office, 17 Oct and telegrams (3) to Washington, 17 Oct and 19 Oct 1942.

asked to watch the matter to ensure that action was "satisfactory and expeditious".[1]

4—THE RETURN OF THE 9TH DIVISION, NOVEMBER 1942-FEBRUARY 1943

The return of the 9th Division to Australia is likely to be attended for many years with controversy centred chiefly on such points as whether the division was in fact urgently needed in Australia at that time; and whether its withdrawal did in fact affect the completeness of Allied victory in the Middle East.

Essentially, the issue was the same one that underlay all Australian decisions related to the higher direction of the war since December 1941 —the balancing of the defence of Australia and the claims of the South-West Pacific Area against the Roosevelt-Churchill conception of the overall strategy.

The controversy is likely to be affected by differences of opinion as to the exact nature of the peril that faced Australia in October 1942, and the exact quality of the other forces, both Australian men of the A.I.F. and militia and the Americans, already available in Australia to meet it. Was the peril so extreme and were all other forces already in Australia so unsuitable that the 9th had to be taken out of action in the Middle East in November 1942, in order that it might go into action in New Guinea in September 1943? The Government's estimates of Australian peril varied a great deal from time to time. For example, in August 1942 Curtin expressed to the Advisory War Council the opinion that the "defensive situation" of Australia was "satisfactory". Early in October, at a meeting of the War Cabinet, the Minister for the Army and the Minister for Air, in reporting on their visit to New Guinea at the end of September, spoke of the confidence of both army and air force that they could defeat the Japanese. There were then over 60,000 Allied troops at Port Moresby and Milne Bay, including 18,600 Americans; morale was high and equipment "generally satisfactory".[2] By the end of the month the War Cabinet was expressing deep concern at the situation, having responded rapidly in the way it usually did to bad news.

There were, however, many reasons besides any danger to Australia behind the recall of the 9th. There was the need to relieve the burden placed on the 6th and 7th in New Guinea, allied with insufficient military faith in the militia; the old principle that the Australian Army should fight as one army under one commander; the difficulty of maintaining reinforcements for a division overseas; the ambition to strengthen the South-West Pacific Command for an eventual offensive; the political difficulty of extending the area in which the militia could serve (owing to Labour objections to what was termed conscription) so long as there was still a volunteer expeditionary force in an overseas theatre; the "psychological" effect of absence on the men of the 9th.

[1] Telegram to Bruce, 17 Oct 1942.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 2427, 6 Oct 1942.

Some of these reasons have already been indicated in earlier sections of this chapter and it has been shown that the renewal of the request for the return of the division was related to MacArthur's demand for a strength sufficient to carry out his directive, and that the 9th Division was sometimes used as a bargaining counter. Another reason was found towards the end of 1942 in the increasing seriousness of manpower difficulties in Australia. As will be seen in a subsequent chapter, political and administrative concern over manpower was growing. It is doubtful whether the manpower difficulty alone influenced the Government's decision for the recall of the 9th, but when linked with Blamey's plans for the reorganisation of the army it made a persuasive argument.

On 27th August, after discussions which had been proceeding for months, the Minister for the Army wrote to the Commander of the Allied Land Forces conveying some of the conclusions reached by a Departmental Committee on War Commitments and, in effect, asking on behalf of a Sub-Committee of War Cabinet, which was examining the report, whether the army really had to be maintained at "a strength which will make such serious inroads into the vital life of the Australian community".

Blamey, after discussion with MacArthur, replied on 2nd September to the general effect that the army wanted all it had got and much more. Unless there were balanced naval and air forces, the army needed 25 divisions. Blamey wrote:

> Two factors have emerged that make it clear that the balanced forces in regard to other services than the Army are not forthcoming:
>
> (*a*) The reduction in the proposed programme of R.A.A.F. squadrons.
>
> (*b*) The reduction of the Royal Australian Navy through enemy action and its allocation to tasks not directly in defence of Australia.
>
> The result of these factors is to make the situation in regard to the defence of Australia a ground for serious misgiving. The examination into the manpower position now under discussion was completed subsequent to the plans envisaged in my memorandum of 29th June, although the position was known to be increasing in difficulty.
>
> The reorganisation is almost completed as a scheme, but is not yet fully accomplished in fact. It has caused a considerable degree of derangement and it will be some time before the Army is settled into its new form and capable of exercising its full strength. This was foreseen as an inevitable necessity.
>
> The reorganisation has been greatly interfered with also by the necessity of moving considerable forces to Port Moresby and Milne Bay and by readjustment of forces at Townsville and in the Cape York Peninsula.
>
> One of the objects of the reorganisation was to adjust the forces to the new weapons recently made available, e.g., tanks and anti-aircraft artillery. Regard was given to the limitations of manpower and it was foreseen that a reduction to twelve divisions was inevitable. This, it was hoped, would be compensated for by greater striking power by the inclusion of three light armoured divisions.
>
> The position has now been reached which makes it probable that, owing to the manpower limitations, it will be some time before the third of these armoured divisions can be completed. Effort, therefore, is being concentrated on completing the first two of these divisions and completing their training at the earliest date.
>
> The geographical conditions, such as long distances between localities and lack of communications in Australia, forces a degree of dissemination of the forces that is always dangerous. A further cause of this is the necessity for fighting in the

outer areas, e.g., New Guinea. This dispersion, while unavoidable, is most disturbing owing to the difficulty of transferring large forces rapidly.

The present distribution of the Army in Australia is briefly:

1. New Guinea—Two divisions.
2. Northern Territory—One division.
3. Western Australia—Two divisions.
4. First Army—Two Australian divisions (one in Townsville, one in southern Queensland), plus two American divisions.
5. Second Army—Two Australian divisions. In New South Wales and Victoria, First and Second Armoured Divisions being organised. Third Armoured Division (not yet fully planned).

Under the reorganisation scheme certain divisions will be reduced from a three-brigade to a two-brigade basis and the present allocation on this basis will definitely lead to the reduction of a further division but not to a further reduction in the number of brigades.

It may thus be considered that the total available Army will be only eight infantry and two armoured divisions by the end of this year with a third armoured division being prepared. The 9th Australian Division in the Middle East has not yet been considered in the above but it will require considerable reinforcement.

This, with the wide dispersion of the forces and the fact that the hope of further American divisions being made available has not yet been realised makes me extremely anxious for the position of this country.

Should there be serious naval reverses or should there be inadequate naval forces for the protection of Australia from overseas attack the forces available may easily prove inadequate to the task of defeating the enemy.

From the above it will be realised that further consideration may have to be given to the Order of Battle before the end of the current year. But the strength foreshadowed should be regarded as the irreducible minimum in spite of the disruption of the general life of the community, which must depend for its very existence on the capacity of the Army to overcome any invasion.

These possibilities are too real to be discounted. Figures as already laid down should be aimed at by every possible action.

The Commander-in-Chief, S.W.P. Area authorises me to say that he regards most seriously any reduction in the strength of the Army equally with myself.

On 4th September, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieut-General J. Northcott, in a submission to the Minister for the Army, drew attention to the fact that the 9th Division was again engaged in active operations and might be called upon in the near future to take part in active operations for an extended period. After quoting representations made by the G.O.C., A.I.F., Middle East, Lieut-General Morshead,[3] on 27th August, he asked for approval for the dispatch of about 6,113 additional reinforcements. A convoy escort arranged in connection with the dispatch of 5,000 New Zealand troops to the Middle East would be available at the end of September.

On 11th September Forde minuted the submission to the effect that, after consultation with the Prime Minister, the recommendation had been approved and added: "The future of the 9th Division is at present the subject of discussion between the Australian Government, the President of the United States of America and Mr. Churchill."

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[3] Lt-Gen Sir Leslie Morshead, KCB, KBE, CMG, DSO, ED. Comd 18 Bde 1939-41; GOC 9 Div 1941-43, II Corps and NGF during 1943-44, I Corps 1944-45. Branch manager, shipping line; of Sydney; b. Ballarat, Vic, 18 Sep 1889. Died 26 Sep 1959.

On 15th October this approval for reinforcements was cancelled after reference of the whole question of the situation in the Pacific to the War Cabinet and Advisory Council. It would thus appear that, up to the middle of October, when the definite request for its return was made, Australia was still prepared to reinforce the 9th. Although the case for the return of the division was based on Australian shortage of manpower, those arguments were given force by the failure to obtain land reinforcements or added air strength from the United States of America.

On 20th October Bruce, replying to the instruction of the 17th to ensure satisfactory and expeditious action on the Australian Government's request, reported that the Chiefs of Staff were examining the problem with a view to the return of the 9th Division at the earlest possible date but that, owing to the fact that certain operations in North Africa were now imminent and that a part in it had been allocated to the 9th Division, the date of its withdrawal from the front line depended on developments in the immediate future.[4]

The telegram from Bruce on the 20th caused some concern that the wishes of the Government might not be carried out expeditiously. On the prompting of Evatt, who feared "dangerous and irreparable delay", Curtin at once sent a further message to Bruce instructing him to emphasise to the United Kingdom Government the "crucial importance" of the fact that the 9th Division was not going to be reinforced, that the Australian Government would not agree to its being broken up by the replacement of its losses from ancillary and other units; and that, as previously stated on 30th July,[5] it was essential that the Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East should have regard to this position in his use of the division.[6] Morshead was also informed on the 24th of what had been done and asked to "safeguard the fulfilment of the Government's decision and all its implications".

In practical terms this meant that after it had used up its pool of reinforcements in the Middle East the 9th Division would have to be withdrawn from the line. The same condition on its use had been implicit in the views expressed by Australia on 30th July. Bruce replied on 23rd October that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff had instructed the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, that the division was to be withdrawn from the line as soon as practicable with a view to its return to Australia at the earliest possible date.[7]

On the 28th a personal message from Churchill to Curtin was received telling with ardour of the opening of the great battle in Egypt and adding: "You will have observed with pride and pleasure the distinguished part which the 9th Australian Division are playing in what may be an event of the first magnitude".[8] Plans for this battle of El Alamein had in fact begun in August and the mighty barrage which signalled its opening began

[4] Telegram from Bruce, 20 Oct 1942.
[5] Telegram Curtin to Churchill.
[6] Telegram to Bruce, 22 Oct 1942.
[7] Telegram from Bruce, 23 Oct 1942.
[8] Telegram from Churchill, 28 Oct 1942.

at 9.40 p.m. on 23rd October. British, Australian, Free French, Greek, New Zealand, South African and Indian troops were engaged.

On the 29th, the War Cabinet, at a meeting from which Curtin was absent, decided to thank Churchill for his information and stress "the vital importance of the return of the 9th Division to Australia as soon as possible in view of the situation in the South-West and South Pacific areas".[9] The reply which Curtin actually sent added a phrase to the effect that Australia was glad to be associated with the forces of the Empire and the United Nations in what was hoped would be a decisive blow to the enemy in the Middle East. He asked for Churchill's personal interest in ensuring the fullest cooperation by all concerned in meeting the various requests for the return of the division.[1] Churchill replied assuring Curtin of his personal interest and referring to the instructions which had been sent to Alexander on the 23rd.[2]

In the succeeding days, the fact that the 9th Division had been used at El Alamein became the subject of a post-mortem inquiry in the War Cabinet, indicating that at least some of those concerned with the question in Australia were still not happy that the 9th Division should have been sent into battle.

In acknowledging his instructions of the 24th Morshead had revealed that when he saw the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, on the 27th, he found that Alexander had not been informed of the Commonwealth Government's decision and that Alexander could not consider the release at the present time of the 9th Division as it was the main pivot of operations and without it the battle would collapse. It would be impossible to do without the magnificent services of the 9th Division until the present operations had been brought to a successful conclusion but he undertook to arrange for its relief "as soon as the operational situation permits". Australia at once asked Bruce to take up the matter with the United Kingdom Government and recalled once again that as far back as 30th July Australia said that the use of the 9th Division would have to be governed by the position in regard to reinforcements.

The introduction of this argument might seem to support a view that when Australia agreed to leave the 9th Division in the Middle East it never intended that the division should be used in major operations, but, against this, it has to be remembered that as recently as 11th September Curtin and Forde, without reference to the War Cabinet, had agreed to send reinforcements because it was expected that the division would enter a period of more intense activity.

Bruce confirmed that instructions were sent from London to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, but suggested that they did not preclude Alexander from using the division in the recent offensive within the limits set by the fact that no more reinforcements were coming forward and that the division was not to be broken up. He then set out the position

[9] War Cabinet Minute 2465, 29 Oct 1942.
[1] Telegram to Churchill, 29 Oct 1942.
[2] Telegram from Churchill, 28 Oct 1942.

as he saw it. When the Australian telegram of 17th October arrived, the offensive, in which the 9th Division had been allocated a vital role, was on the eve of being launched and the withdrawal of the 9th Division at that stage would have meant the abandonment of the operation. The offensive had now been launched with initial success, in considerable measure due to the work of the 9th Division and the retention of the division in the operations was essential to their continued success. Could he assume that, in view of the importance of the operations in the Middle East, Australia would agree to the continued use of the 9th Division until such time as the operational situation permitted its withdrawal and subject to the same limits as before, namely, that it would not be reinforced and must not be broken up.[3]

The Australian reply accepted this assumption, "in view of the situation with which we are now confronted", but found it difficult to understand why, in planning the operation the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, had not noted that the use of the 9th Division "had an important tag to it", namely that set by the agreement on 30th July to its retention in the Middle East. Australia was relying on the division being returned to it in good shape and strength.[4]

After Bruce had assured Australia that no discussion as to the disposition or use of individual units had taken place with him in the British War Cabinet, Ministers apparently accepted his advice against carrying the post-mortem examination any further.[5]

Meanwhile Roosevelt replied to Curtin, in a message received in Australia on 1st November, expressing his conviction that the common cause could best be served if the 9th Division remained in the Middle East and offering to dispatch a United States division to Australia from Hawaii, it being understood that, if the situation required, this additional division could be diverted to another locality within the South Pacific or South-West Pacific Areas where its employment would be of greater advantage to the defence of Australia.[6]

In the knowledge that this message had been sent, the Chiefs of Staff in London deferred action until the Australian reply was known, as the return of the 9th Division would entail a diversion of shipping from other commitments.[7]

On 16th November Curtin replied at length to Roosevelt, reviewing the attempts to obtain the return of the whole of the A.I.F. since the outbreak of war with Japan. The attitude of the Australian Government had been quite definite and clear. It was now impossible for Australia to dispatch to the Middle East the reinforcements necessary to maintain the division and so it must return to Australia, where it could be built up again by the allocation of personnel from other formations which were being disbanded owing to the reduction in the number of Australian divisions.

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[3] Telegram from Bruce, 1 Nov 1942.
[4] Telegram to Bruce, 4 Nov 1942.
[5] Telegram from Bruce, 7 Nov 1942.
[6] Message transmitted through U.S. Navy.
[7] Telegram from Bruce, 2 Nov 1942.

The decisions on global strategy have been taken by Mr Churchill and yourself (Curtin continued). The Commonwealth Government has shown a ready willingness to cooperate in other theatres at considerable risk to the security of Australia. This has been demonstrated by the service overseas of our naval, land and air forces and our continued participation in the Empire Air Training Scheme. The Government considers that the contributions it has made to other theatres entitle it to the assurance that the fullest possible support will be given to the situation in the Pacific. You will recall that the Military Advisers of the Australian Government consider that three further divisions are necessary in the South-West Pacific Area. In view of its responsibilities for the local defence of Australia and in the light of the views of its advisers, the Government feels that the maximum strength of the Australian forces should be concentrated in the South-West Pacific Area to meet all the contingencies of the military situation in the Pacific.

We are grateful to learn that you are sending to the South or South-West Pacific Area a division from Hawaii. We would be delighted to welcome it to Australia, where it would be an invaluable addition to the two splendid American divisions already here.[8]

At the same time Curtin communicated with Churchill and with Bruce, informing them of the action taken, and saying that "as the situation for which the 9th Division was allowed to remain has now been cleared up in a most satisfactory manner" early action should be taken to return the 9th Division to Australia.[9]

On 19th November, Roosevelt informed Curtin that he was taking up the question of the return of the 9th Division with the Combined Staffs immediately.[1]

At this point the position was further complicated by the fact that the New Zealand Government also asked for the return of their division from the Middle East. Besides arguments related to the needs in the Pacific and manpower difficulties, their case was that it would be hard for the New Zealand Government to resist public demand for the return of the division once it became known that the remaining Australian division was being returned. The Australian Government was disposed to answer this by saying in effect, "We got in first", and, if the double demand caused any difficulty either in the military strength of the Middle East or through shortage of shipping, New Zealand should wait her turn.[2] That difficulty disappeared, however, when the New Zealand Government, in response to representations by Churchill, referred the whole matter to a secret session of the New Zealand House of Representatives which took a unanimous decision not to press at that juncture for the return of New Zealand troops.[3]

After all the argument was over Mr Curtin repaired an earlier fault by a friendly message to Mr Peter Fraser, the New Zealand Prime Minister, on the identity of Australian and New Zealand interests, making the point that the return of the 9th Division was an accretion to the strength of the whole region.[4]

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[8] Telegram to Washington, 16 Nov 1942.
[9] Telegrams (2) to Churchill; and (4) to Bruce, 16 Nov 1942.
[1] Telegram from Washington, 19 Nov 1942.
[2] Telegram from Bruce, 21 Nov and to Bruce, 24 Nov 1942.
[3] Telegram from Prime Minister of New Zealand, 5 Dec, repeating telegram from Fraser to Churchill, 4 Dec 1942.
[4] Telegram to Prime Minister of New Zealand, 14 Dec 1942.

Churchill, who was understood by Bruce to be in close consultation with Roosevelt on the subject, also made a last appeal to Australia, referring to the probability of large-scale action in the eastern Mediterranean in the early spring and more particularly to the great shipping difficulties. "So far as we are concerned we shall of course not oppose your wishes," said Churchill, "although we greatly regret the departure from the Middle East theatre of a division which has rendered distinguished service. The object should be to bring the greatest number of the United Nations divisions into contact with the enemy, and certainly it would appear more helpful to the common cause if fresh troops were moved from the United States into the Pacific and into action against Japan than that troops already engaged with the enemy in another part of the world should be withdrawn."[5]

The information from Bruce was that Churchill, though opposed to the withdrawal, would have reluctantly acquiesced in it but had been moved to raise the issue again because Roosevelt was so perturbed.[6] Churchill did indeed conclude his message with these words: "As I know the great importance which you have always attached to American opinion and how much you value the substantial aid they have given to the defence of Australia, I feel bound to put these points before you."

Curtin told Churchill he was disappointed. "Instead of an intimation that you will not oppose our wishes, I had every expectation that you would actively support our case with the President." He doubted whether the effects of the transfer on shipping would mean the difference between success or failure in some other theatre, but the transfer might mean everything to Australia. Australia was grateful for the assistance received but, quite candidly, it had not been as much as Australia had reason to expect. He had the gravest misgivings as to whether the needs of the South-West Pacific Area were understood. He would be surprised to learn that the return of the 9th Division would have any adverse reaction on American opinion. Indeed there was a body of opinion which thought too little had been sent to the Pacific. He strongly requested that Churchill's influence with the President be exerted to secure the return of the division.

In the course of this reply, Curtin added one new reason and gave higher value to one which had previously been mentioned only in passing:

> The question is also arising indirectly in connection with my proposed amendment to the provisions of the *Defence Act* to enable members of the Militia Forces, as distinct from the A.I.F., to serve outside Australia in the South-West Pacific Area. The strength and disposition of the A.I.F. is a crucial point in connection with this proposal, one of the main aspects of which is that the A.I.F. alone is not sufficient to meet the strategical needs of the commitments accepted by the Australian Government when it agreed to the directive for the Commander of the South-West Pacific Area. It is therefore of cardinal importance that the 9th Division should be in the South-West Pacific Area. It is evident that a public statement on future policy relating to the disposition and employment of the A.I.F. will soon be necessary.

The other point, which had been mentioned in an earlier cablegram,

[5] Telegram from Churchill, 24 Nov 1942.
[6] Telegram from Bruce, 25 Nov 1942.

was that "for reasons of morale" the 9th Division could not be left in the Middle East indefinitely. This question had arisen for the A.I.F. in France in the 1914-18 war and was bound to recur.[7]

Churchill replied on 2nd December:

I and my professional advisers are very sorry that you continue to press for the move of the 9th Australian Division which we do not consider is in accordance with the general strategic interests of the United Nations. Nevertheless in accordance with your wishes, I shall recommend to the President that the 9th Australian Division return to Australia as soon as shipping can be provided. This will probably be early in the New Year. I may say that it will involve a loss to us in personnel shipping lift of 10,000 men in the United States convoys and 20,000 in the Trans Atlantic build-up for the invasion of the continent.

Reference your paragraph 8 [in which Curtin had assumed that, as in the case of the 6th and 7th Divisions, equipment as well as personnel would be returned] we very much regret that we cannot arrange for the equipment of your division to be returned to Australia. We could not face the cost to our offensive operations of the cargo and motor transport shipping necessary for this movement.

You will like to know that in response to an urgent request by the Americans for naval help in the Pacific we are proposing to offer them the two modern armoured aircraft carriers *Victorious* and *Illustrious* under the command of a British Admiral for service under American orders in the Pacific. These are among the most vital units we possess. We have only four of this class. We are asking for *Ranger* from the Atlantic in exchange. I hope this movement will provide an additional and important reinsurance for the safety of Australia.[8]

On the following day a message was received from Roosevelt extending congratulations on the achievements of the 9th Division in the Middle East and agreeing to its return "in view of the strenuous period of combat service which it had endured and its long absence from home". He thought, however, that it should not be moved until a final and decisive victory had been achieved over Rommel and until it could be moved without making too serious a drain on shipping. He suggested postponement until early in the new year and said that, to conserve shipping, only personnel should be moved, equipment being left in Egypt.

Our operations in the South-West Pacific are affected more seriously by the scarcity of shipping than by lack of available troops. The campaign now being undertaken in North Africa, including the action in which the 9th Division is engaged in the Middle East, will have the result, we hope, of opening the sea lanes of the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal. You can appreciate how this will alleviate the critical shortage in shipping. The benefits thus derived will be felt in the South-West Pacific just as they will be in all other theatres in which troops of the United Nations are engaged. I feel that by contributing to our success in the Mediterranean the 9th Division has added to the security of Australia more than it would have had it remained at home.

Roosevelt also informed Curtin of the plans for sending the 25th United States Division from Hawaii to Australia during November and December and, with this and the 9th Division, he felt that Curtin could be reassured as to the adequacy of the troops available to drive the

[7] Telegram to Churchill, 30 Nov 1942.

[8] Telegram from Churchill, 2 Dec. In the final event the United States took only one British carrier and kept the *Ranger*. (Telegram from Churchill, 10 Dec.)

Japanese away from Australia to such a distance as to make an invasion impossible.[9]

The question whether it was essential for the 9th Division to bring back its equipment was referred for comment to Blamey then in New Guinea. On that point, Blamey thought that heavy equipment could be left behind if shipping must be saved and observed that jungle warfare called for a very low scale of transport and reduced strength of field artillery. He was content to leave details to the staff. He took the opportunity, however, to draw attention to more serious questions. His experience of warfare in the tropics, he wrote, had made it clear to him that Australia could not maintain in the field even the reduced number of divisions of the reorganised Australian Military Forces and that a further decrease by two infantry brigades would be necessary. The wastage of men in tropical warfare in undeveloped areas was immense. At least a third of the force at Milne Bay was already infected with malaria and, besides malaria, the battle wastage was also considerable.[1]

Blamey was disappointed too at progress:

> After the magnificent advance through the most difficult area, the Owen Stanley Range, it is a very sorry story. It has revealed the fact that the American troops cannot be classified as attack troops. They are definitely not equal to the Australian militia, and from the moment they met opposition sat down and have hardly gone forward a yard.

The 6th and 7th A.I.F. Divisions needed a prolonged rest out of action as they had a large number of reinforcements to absorb and a large number of sick to return. His faith in the militia was growing but his faith in the Americans had "sunk to zero".

> If the 9th Division is not returned, I fear very greatly that we will have to sit down for a very long time in this area in an endeavour to defend it, mainly by keeping the Jap flotillas away by air action.[2]

Curtin drew on Blamey's report, except those passages referring to the Americans, for composing further messages to Churchill and Roosevelt, drawing attention to the great difficulties of the South-West Pacific Area, the halting of the New Guinea campaign, the wastage of men, the stubbornness of the Japanese, the necessity for further reducing the strength of the Australian Army, and the necessity for dispersing the limited number of divisions over a great continent. He pressed again for the return of the 9th Division as early as possible and asked only that certain minimum requirements necessary to ensure its effective employment in the South-West Pacific be sent with it. The remainder of the equipment including most of its vehicles and its artillery should be left in the Middle

[9] Telegram from Washington, 3 Dec 1942. At that time there were four infantry divisions in Hawaii. The 25th began moving to Australia on 25th November, but its destination was soon changed to Guadalcanal, where it began to arrive on 17th December.

[1] Early in 1942 when the 49th and 53rd Battalions were training at Port Moresby there were about 10 per cent off duty each day because of sickness, including malaria and dysentery. For the quarter ending 23rd January 1943 tropical diseases were to cause 14,011 casualties as against 4,137 battle casualties. See A. S. Walker, *Clinical Problems of War* (1952), pp. 109-10 and elsewhere, for the effects of tropical diseases.

[2] Letter from Blamey to Curtin, 4 Dec 1942. By special messenger.

East.[3] The action was reported to the Advisory War Council, which had not taken a decisive part in any of these matters since 15th October.[4]

Page was an open convert to the Government's view. When in England he had advocated the retention of the 9th Division in the Middle East. He now advocated its return. The reasons were partly the improved situation in the Middle East but very largely the extremities of Australian troops in New Guinea through the wastage of disease.[5]

Churchill replied to Curtin expressing his appreciation of the full explanation of Australian difficulties and promising the completion of the arrangements. "The 9th Australian Division," he wrote, "will carry with them from the African desert a splendid reputation, and the honour of having played a leading part in a memorable victory for the Empire and the common cause."

Curtin summed up this phase of the discussion in a review of the war situation which he made in the House of Representatives on 10th December 1942:

> Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt were unable fully to accept the views of the Australian Government on Pacific strategy and the provision of the forces and supplies sought. However, they gave certain assurances and practical support, for which the Government is deeply grateful, and it felt bound to accept their conclusions in a spirit of united comradeship.
>
> The essential question confronting the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington is how the war can be most vigorously waged on all fronts and the resources of the United Nations disposed to bring about the speedy and certain defeat of the enemy. The landings in the French Colonies in North Africa, which entail large demands on these resources, have now been publicly explained by the President as having been based on a decision reached by Mr Churchill and himself during Mr Churchill's visit to America at the end of last year.
>
> At the time that the President and Mr Churchill reached their decision to defeat Germany first, the transformation had not come over the Pacific situation by the loss of the Philippines, Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies. We should therefore not lose sight of the significance for us in Australia of the predictions of Mr Churchill, during his broadcast of 29th November, on the duration and course of the war. Notwithstanding the concentration of Anglo-American strength against the Axis Powers in Europe, Mr Churchill said: "I know nothing that has happened yet which justifies the hope that the war will not be long or that bloody years will not lie ahead." Predicting that the war in Europe may end before the war in the Pacific, he brings out clearly the significance of the warning in my own broadcast on 4th October: "Australia, therefore, has the task of holding the enemy until the potential becomes the reality and we can strike with all the punching power of the United Nations. Until that day comes, we must hang grimly on."[6]

President Roosevelt's address to Congress on 7th January reviewed the events of 1942 and described "the events of the long fronts in Russia" as "by far the largest and most important developments in the whole world-wide strategic picture of 1942". He reviewed the battles in the

[3] Telegram to Washington and to Bruce, 8 Dec 1942.
[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1105, 8 Dec 1942.
[5] Telegram to Bruce from Page, 14 Dec 1942.
[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 1691.

Pacific of which he considered that off Midway Island "our most important victory in 1942".

As early as one year ago, we set as a primary task in the war of the Pacific a day-by-day and week-by-week and month-by-month destruction of more Japanese war materials than Japanese industry could replace. Most certainly that task has been and is being performed by our fighting ships and planes.

The period of our defensive attrition in the Pacific is drawing to a close. Now our aim is to force the Japanese to fight. Last year, we stopped them. This year, we intend to advance.

Turning to the European war, however, he said "it was clear that our first task was to lessen the concentrated pressure on the Russian front".

The 9th Division reached Fremantle on 7th February 1943, and the eastern coast ports on the 25th and 27th. After 21 days' leave it was concentrated in the Atherton area in Queensland for re-equipping and reorganisation as a jungle division—a task that was completed at the end of May 1943.

Curtin expressed his appreciation to Churchill for the measures taken to ensure its safety while en route.[7] Churchill replied:

I am glad your fine division got home safely. As I told General Morshead in a letter I gave him before his departure from Cairo this division has left behind it a record of energy, courage, enterprise and daring which will be an imperishable memory among all the nations of the British Empire who fought in true comradeship in the Western Desert. I wish their arms all success in their new sphere of operations.[8]

This message was repeated to Parliament on 23rd March when Curtin announced the "safe arrival in Australia" of the division. Fadden joined in paying tribute to their record. "The return of the 9th Division should cause the Australian people to stiffen their determination to devote all their energies to the task that must ultimately result in victory."[9]

The parliamentarians were not alone in suggesting that the example of the soldier should stir the civilian to greater efforts. General Blamey, describing the return of the division and quoting the deeds of the other Middle East divisions and of the militia in Papua, continued:

But I speak for the Army when I say that if we are to win, the united nation must stand behind us and give us its full support. The army is both disappointed and disgusted that while each of us is prepared to give everything, even life itself, for our country's safety, we find far too many of our people who fail to realise the serious position which confronts this nation.[1]

5—A LIMITED OFFENSIVE IN THE PACIFIC

Broadcasting on the first anniversary of the Japanese attack, Curtin said:

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[7] Telegram to Churchill, 1 Mar 1943.

[8] Telegram from Churchill, 6 Mar 1943.

[9] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 174, p. 2164.

[1] Reported in *Sydney Morning Herald,* 24 Mar 1943. In the same paper Mr Curtin expressed himself "profoundly disappointed at the number of subscriptions so far lodged for the Third Liberty Loan", and Ministers were reported as being particularly annoyed at queues outside Melbourne picture shows at 9 a.m. They blamed "luxury spending rather than the increased taxation announced . . . for difficulties facing the loan organisation".

Victory can be won only by offensive action. To take offensive action, all key positions in Australia must be held strongly. That involves fighting forces and also means keeping them supplied. We must drive the enemy out of Papua and New Guinea, and, again, hold those places strongly. We must safeguard all approaches to Australia at present held and drive the enemy from the islands around us which he now holds, and, again, we must hold them. We must strike relentlessly at Japanese lines of communications and regions of supplies of raw materials.

There is a long way to go. It is a march which goes on from Buna and Gona, on to Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, on to the Philippines, on to the restoration of the Burma Road to heroic China. We must continue to build up our fighting forces to the very utmost of our capacity in manpower and maintain them at a maximum never contemplated in Australia's history. We are not alone, but we must, as I have said, take our place in global strategy until the time when the striking power of the United Nations in the Pacific theatre reaches a peak and we can go out after the Japanese in full offensive strength.

To achieve what is contemplated for the year ahead, all Australia's resources must continue to be devoted without stint to the task at hand.[4]

On 19th January 1943, Curtin, having learnt that Churchill and Roosevelt were meeting and assuming that they would proceed to make decisions on "global strategy", addressed to each of them an identical communication urging the allocation of additional aircraft to the South-West Pacific Area to permit of the earliest possible extension of offensive action against the Japanese. He based his representations on a report he had recently received from MacArthur on the lessons of the New Guinea campaign. MacArthur spoke of a "broadened conception of warfare" that had come from the way in which air and ground forces had been welded together in Papua. The offensive and defensive power of the air and the adaptability, range and capacity of air transport in an effective combination with ground forces would permit "the application of offensive power in swift massive strokes, rather than the dilatory and costly island-to-island advance". In effect MacArthur wanted to change from the tactics of island-hopping which had previously been thought to be the way in which the Allies would advance through the archipelagos against a succession of Japanese strongholds. The new conception called for union between ground troops and all components of the air force, and for some naval support.

Curtin, accepting the general's lesson, said that if 1,500 additional operational and 500 additional transport aircraft could be made available to the South-West Pacific Area as soon as possible in 1943 and if naval dispositions could be made to give appropriate covering support, Japan could be driven from the islands and perhaps even struck a mortal blow. He urged Churchill and Roosevelt to demonstrate that "we lack nothing in comparison with our enemies and our Russian allies in devising methods of warfare appropriate to the circumstances which confront us and with weapons that have been developed for the hurt and discomfiture of the enemy".[5]

There was no direct reply to these representations but the effective

[4] National broadcast, 6th December 1942. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 46, pp. 45-8.

[5] Telegram to Washington, 19 Jan 1943.

answer to them was given by the decisions of the Casablanca Conference of 14th-24th January 1943, at which Roosevelt and Churchill, with their Chiefs of Staff, laid down plans for offensives in Europe in 1943 and 1944. Following the Casablanca Conference, Australia was informed of the decisions affecting the South-West Pacific Area in the following terms:

> The Prime Minister gave the fullest possible assurance to the President that, after the defeat of Germany, Great Britain would pursue the war against Japan with the maximum available resources by land, sea and air. The Prime Minister had repeated this assurance to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.
>
> Operations in the Pacific theatre will continue with the object of maintaining pressure on Japan, retaining the initiative and attaining a position of readiness for a full-scale offensive by the United Nations as soon as Germany is defeated. These operations will meanwhile be kept within such limits as will not prejudice the capacity of the United Nations to take advantage of any favourable opportunity for an endeavour to defeat Germany in 1943. Subject to this reservation, they will include limited offensives in Burma preparatory to reconquest of that country; building up of United States air forces in China and continuance of United States operations in the South-West Pacific to the greatest possible extent.
>
> The objectives of United States operations in the South-West Pacific are as follows:
>
> (*a*) To keep Japan from further expansion and from consolidating and strengthening her present positions.
>
> (*b*) To maintain the security of the Midway-Hawaii line and communications to Australia and New Zealand.
>
> (*c*) To block Japanese approaches to Australia either via Rabaul or from the north-west via Malaya.
>
> (*d*) To secure positions from which to threaten Japanese communications with the Dutch East Indies, to the Philippines and to the South China Sea.
>
> Forces available for the above operations will be limited by the necessity for concentrating the maximum United States and British forces against Germany, the primary enemy, but these will be sufficient to ensure that we retain the initiative against the Japanese.[6]

In a general discussion of the results of Casablanca at a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 2nd February it was recognised that the Churchill-Roosevelt strategy of January 1942 had again been confirmed and it would not be profitable to challenge it. The decisions should be viewed as laying down a programme for 1943 and accepted as "a pro tem policy". It should be emphasised, however, that even a holding war in the Pacific required certain things and a statement of the requirements which were necessary to secure and maintain the Allied position in the South-West Pacific Area should be furnished to Churchill and the President. Curtin said he would consult MacArthur as to whether the forces in the South-West Pacific Area were sufficient to achieve the objectives laid down and, if not, what additional forces were required.[7]

In the following week the Government learnt, through MacArthur, that the United States War Department had assigned the Sixth Army to the South-West Pacific Area. The Australian understanding on receipt of this news was that the Sixth Army consisted of two corps, each of three divisions; that the 32nd and 41st Divisions and the Marine Division already

[6] Telegrams (2) from the Dominions Office, 29 Jan 1943.
[7] Advisory War Council Minute 1129, 2 Feb 1943.

in Australia would comprise one corps and that an additional force of three divisions would be sent from the United States.[8] There was also a clear prospect of further naval reinforcements. By June 1943, the Chief of the Naval Staff said, there would be a powerful United States fleet in the Pacific. From a naval point of view the position was very satisfactory.[9]

The outlook was further improved by the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, between 2nd and 4th March, when a Japanese convoy attempting to reinforce Lae and Salamaua was virtually annihilated by Allied aircraft, 4 destroyers and 8 transports being sunk and 85 Japanese aircraft put out of action. In New Guinea the advance across the Kokoda track (September-October 1942) and the assault on the Buna-Gona beach-heads (November, December and January) had cleared Papua of Japanese and cleared the way for further advances along the northern coast.

Throughout this period Curtin was in the closest touch with MacArthur and a decision in March to press the Australian demands would appear to have owed as much as ever to MacArthur's influence. The decision was accompanied by a return of pessimism. In mid-January, Curtin had spoken of the Allies having the initiative and of Japan being "extended and vulnerable". As he saw the position then, Japan was concentrating her main strength on building up and holding an outer screen to her base at Rabaul, the screen extending from Ambon to the northern Solomon Islands. He then talked of an offensive and a decisive blow against the enemy. Two months later he and MacArthur interpreted Japanese concentrations in the north-west as a renewed threat to Australia and the preparations for a Japanese offensive.

The change is well illustrated by some notes of a discussion between Curtin and MacArthur on 16th March 1943. The discussion took place because the War Cabinet, when discussing a raid by 24 medium bombers and 20 fighters on Darwin on 15th March, had referred to the threat to Australia involved in the Japanese concentrations in the islands north of the mainland. Curtin left the meeting to consult MacArthur by "secraphone" and, on his return, quoted MacArthur as saying that there was clear evidence that the enemy was trying to infiltrate and shove his position nearer to Torres Strait. MacArthur did not possess sufficient strength to meet all the enemy moves in the north-east and eastern sector and at the same time to meet all probable enemy moves in the north-west sector. He could not deal with strong enemy thrusts in both areas simultaneously. At present the north-west sector was in process of being built up by the enemy. MacArthur did not think the enemy had sufficient forces to launch a major attack now, but that he would require from two to four months to develop the requisite conjunction of forces to make a serious attack. The enemy was developing a position of readiness. In the arc of islands outside the mainland of Australia the enemy was developing 67 airfields, and when these were completed he would be able to use them for the purpose of operating air forces of a strength from 1,500 to 2,000 planes.

[8] Advisory War Council Minute 1136, 9 Feb 1943.
[9] Advisory War Council Minute 1129 2(vi), 2 Feb 1943.

This meant that the Allies would have to develop equality in strength. At present there was no evidence of a serious concentration of air forces on the part of the enemy on his perimeter but there was evidence of heavy concentrations of ground troops. He had at least eight first-class shock divisions. The Japanese Commanding General was at Dobo in the Aru Islands to the south of Dutch New Guinea and he had a combat team. There were two other combat teams which, if they had not been frightened off by Allied bombing, would probably be ready by next week. "Altogether, this is a menacing move which must be met."

Curtin's notes of the discussion continued:

General MacArthur is trying to get naval forces and has sought three cruisers and nine destroyers in order to cover the western end of Torres Strait. He has asked the United States for 1,000 to 1,500 planes and a corps of troops. Generals Kenney and Sutherland are not asking for forces for the purpose of an offensive against Rabaul or Tokyo but to defend what General MacArthur holds. He states that it is silly talk as things stand to refer to our readiness to push ahead.

The enemy is no longer attempting to cut the lines of communication between Australia and the United States, for example Pearl Harbour. His concern is to deal with the Australian base and to concentrate the whole of his power on this weak country. The holding war now requires that we shall be able to build up a strength sufficient to meet the enemy's increasingly growing strength arising from his concentrations. We can as things stand hold now but we could not hold against a greatly increased strength unless we were able to build up greater strength.

The enemy has diagnosed the situation pretty well the same as we have. He knows the correct thing in war is to concentrate superior strength against a weak position. The South-West Pacific is no longer menaced but the north-west approach to the Pacific area and north Australia is.[1]

Notes of a discussion between Curtin and Blamey on 17th March gave the following estimate of the situation:

General Blamey, who was returning from a visit to Allied Headquarters, Brisbane, said he was not disturbed regarding the possibility of heavy Japanese attacks in the immediate future. The Bismarck Sea action and the operations in New Guinea and the Solomons had inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese. It had to be realised, however, with the 6th and 7th A.I.F. Divisions being rehabilitated and the 9th Division dispersed for leave, that there was not any effective force available in Australia for immediate operations. He was most concerned about the possibility of a Japanese attack in force against Merauke, as he would not have adequate forces available to dispose in this centre until about six weeks had elapsed.

It appeared to the Commander-in-Chief that the Japanese, after their easy passage through Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, had learned the lesson of the importance of air superiority and that they were setting out to gain it on the wide arc of islands held by them to the north of Australia. Air bases were being established and the strength of the land and air forces was being increased. . . . It was therefore important that the air strength in the South-West Pacific Area should be built up to a figure, which would enable us to maintain air superiority and hold the initiative in the air.[2]

The outcome of these discussions between Curtin and the generals was that the request for 2,000 aircraft which had been made in January

[1] War Cabinet Minute 2690, 16 Mar 1943, and Defence Department file "Operations at Darwin, 1943".

[2] Advisory War Council Minute 1153, 18 Mar 1943.

for offensive action against Japan was renewed in March as an essential for the holding of the Allied position. To that extent the grand strategy of Casablanca was respected.

MacArthur had already informed Curtin that he was sending Lieut-General Kenney, Air Commander-in-Chief, and Major-General Richard K. Sutherland, his Chief of Staff, to Washington to try to obtain more aid. At the time, this was represented to the Australian Government as being a special and separate undertaking on behalf of the South-West Pacific Area, although, as afterwards explained in a United States War Department statement of 30th March, the officers went to Washington, together with representatives from the other Pacific commands, under arrangements made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff who wished to "acquaint the commanders in the Pacific with the policies and plans decided upon at the recent Casablanca Conference which concerned future action in which Pacific combat theatres will be involved".

Curtin, when he learnt that Sutherland and Kenney were going to Washington, asked MacArthur to suggest any way in which he could "assist the attainment of the objectives which the mission had in view" and it was at MacArthur's direct suggestion, as well as on his own reading of the situation described to him by MacArthur and Blamey, that on 18th March Curtin renewed his own representations to Churchill and Roosevelt.[3]

In an identical message to Churchill and the President, Curtin paraphrased MacArthur's account of Japanese concentrations and asked to be told what air strength would be provided in the South-West Pacific Area to ensure that the initiative in the air was retained by the United Nations and that any heavy Japanese raids would be severely repulsed. He mentioned the risk of raids in the north-west and west.

> The renewal of attacks on Darwin and reconnaissance of the north-west Coast indicate the paramount importance of sufficient strength being able to ensure air superiority along the whole line of contact with the enemy and at other vulnerable points on our coastline especially in the west. Of particular importance is the vital base of Fremantle where, owing to the depletion of the Eastern Fleet, a heavy attack of the tip and run variety might be carried out by naval bombardment and carrier-borne aircraft.[4]

Bruce was asked to give all possible support to the case[5] and, in a frank telegram of 23rd March reporting on the examination of the request by the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff, he reviewed the arguments with which Australia was confronted. The Chiefs of Staff argued that a request for 2,000 aircraft was out of all relation to the increases being given to other theatres of operations and would give the South-West Pacific more than was required to give effect to the agreed strategy of "beat-Hitler-first"; the provision and maintenance of these aircraft, including petrol and oils, would impose extensive demands on shipping resources; that while Japan might be creating bases from which 1,500 to 2,000 air-

[3] Letter from MacArthur to Curtin, 17 Mar 1943.
[4] Telegram to Churchill and telegram to Washington, 18 Mar 1943.
[5] Telegrams (3) to Bruce, 18 Mar 1943.

craft could be operated Japan would be unable to provide anything like this number of aircraft, for her total first-line strength was only 1,800 aircraft, of which 850 would have to be retained in Japan and the northern areas and 500 to cover Malaya, Burma, Siam and Indo-China; and that as Churchill had consistently resisted suggestions for any modifications of the grand strategy to allow more intensive operations in the Pacific as a whole, it was unlikely he would modify it for the sake of the South-West Pacific alone. The counter-arguments advanced for the Australian claim rested chiefly on a higher estimate of the threat from Japan, Japanese enterprise and readiness to take risks, and Japanese strength.[6] Basically, though argued most ingeniously in many forms, the Australian case was danger from Japan and the general importance of the Pacific.

In reply, Curtin commended the various arguments which Bruce had used, but challenged the suggestion that Australia had agreed on the grand strategy of defeating Germany first. That strategy was determined without reference to the Australian Government and the decisions were taken before Singapore fell. Australia was confronted with a *fait accompli* and had no alternative but to accept the decisions, much as she disliked them.

> We cannot but deplore the rigidity with which a decision taken before the fall of Singapore and the Japanese advance further southwards is being applied without regard to the realities of the situation that has since developed. This also is apparently considered a sound reason for brushing aside the opinions of all experienced Commanders on the spot. It all savours very much of the attitude adopted towards Australia's representations regarding the defence of Malaya before the outbreak of war with Japan.

Curtin argued too that "soft-pedalling" in regard to ultimate offensive action against Japan and the time that would elapse before an offensive was launched were giving an all-clear signal to the Japanese that they could concentrate their forces in the South-West Pacific even at the risk of leaving themselves exposed in other theatres. They knew the Allied strength in this region and the proclaimed intention of the Allies not to increase it. He added that at the end of December 1942 the Japanese had concentrated 432 land-based aircraft in the northern arc of islands stretching from Timor and Celebes to the Solomons and that by the middle of March the strength had grown to 634 aircraft.[7]

The replies from Churchill and Roosevelt did not repeat the arguments which Bruce had encountered in his talks with the Chiefs of Staff. Churchill reminded Curtin that, as the South and South-West Pacific were in the American area of strategic responsibility, the strength of forces to be maintained there was mainly for decision by Washington. It would be difficult for the British Chiefs of Staff to make out a strong case for strong air forces because the information before them was that the maximum strength which the Japanese Air Force was likely to deploy in the South-West Pacific was 650 aircraft; the Japanese Air Force was a waning force and its commitments elsewhere were unlikely to decrease; and the United States

[6] Telegram from Bruce, 23 Mar 1943.
[7] Telegram to Bruce, 29 Mar 1943.

Air Forces in the South and South-West Pacific, which could readily be combined, already totalled 1,300 land-based aircraft and 350 carrier-borne aircraft, not counting the R.A.A.F. Lastly the "agreed strategy" put the defeat of Germany as the first charge on the forces of the United Nations. After that had been achieved, every man who could be carried and every suitable ship and aircraft would be concentrated on Japan.[8]

Roosevelt said that within the last few days MacArthur had been informed of the aircraft to be allotted to the South-West Pacific, and had been given some increases, particularly of transport planes. If the Japanese could mass 1,500 to 2,000 aircraft in the South-West Pacific, the United Nations had even greater capabilities. For some months the United Nations had held the initiative against Japan and had been forcing Japan to meet the United Nations' concentration of forces, thus reducing the likelihood that they could create sizeable concentrations of their own. He appreciated the importance of the South-West Pacific but the necessity for balancing resources throughout all theatres, in line with strategy and having regard to the limitations imposed by a shortage of shipping, prevented the allocation to any one theatre of the total force he would like it to have.[9]

Curtin replied reasserting that Australia had not agreed to the grand strategy but had been given no alternative but to accept decisions which it disliked. He declared that British and American advisers were underrating Japan as a foe and underestimating Japanese air power. He complained of the delay in the delivery of aircraft promised to Australia. In the previous August Australia had been told that 397 aircraft would be made available to the R.A.A.F. from United States production and delivery was expected by the end of March 1943, but only 160 aircraft had been shipped.[1] Of the total of 750 United States aircraft and the 700 modern aircraft of the R.A.A.F. (excluding 400 obsolescent types) in the South-West Pacific Area, only about 650 were in a serviceable condition.

> The minimum for which we ask (he concluded) is not the establishment of a bare air superiority over the Japanese but the provision of such air power as will enable the forces in the South-West Pacific Area to prevent the consolidation of the Japanese in their positions to the north of Australia and so render reasonably feasible the task of ultimately defeating them when the war in Europe ends. We still hope that the decisions of the Casablanca Conference and the reference to retaining the initiative against Japan contemplate this.[2]

The day after the dispatch of his message to Roosevelt and Churchill, Curtin learnt from MacArthur that 524 additional combat planes and 336 non-combat types had been made available to the South-West Pacific Area, together with two divisions of ground troops. No proposal was made to increase the allocation to the R.A.A.F. as it was thought that it would be difficult enough for Australia to man the 45 squadrons planned for 1943. The increases would mean that by the end of October there would be 1,005

[8] Telegram from Churchill, 27 Mar, received 28 Mar 1943.
[9] Telegram from Washington, 29 Mar 1943.
[1] The Australian Legation, Washington, corrected Curtin. The up-to-date figures were 257 shipped, 38 awaiting shipment and 36 being packed (telegram from Washington, 7 Apr).
[2] Telegram to Churchill and to Washington, for Roosevelt, 30 Mar 1943.

aircraft in 60 United States combat squadrons and 234 aircraft in 18 United States transport squadrons.

These communications express clearly for the first time an application of the grand strategy to the South-West Pacific which would mean offensive operations, limited in scope but having as their definite object the disturbance of Japan and the prevention of Japanese concentrations, so that the ultimate large-scale offensive would not have to be made against strongly held positions. The clear advocacy of this policy also marks the end of representations based largely on the fear for the security of the Australian mainland.

When Roosevelt, in informing Curtin of the increased allocations of aircraft, expressed the opinion that the new strength would "preclude any serious attack on the continent of Australia", Curtin replied:

> Our aim was, rather, that aircraft should be made available in sufficient strength to enable the holding strategy in the Pacific to be prosecuted in a manner that would prevent the consolidation of the Japanese in their present positions and inflict on them the greatest possible losses, preliminary to the ultimate assault for their final defeat.[3]

Australia continued to press her case, even more energetically than by telegram, through the presence in Washington and London during April and May of Evatt, who was on his second mission abroad. It joined with agitation which had become clamant in American administration, press and politics for a greater recognition of the claims of the Pacific. Throughout April sections of the American press were campaigning for more aid for the Pacific.

The chief mission entrusted to Evatt on his second visit abroad was to obtain aircraft. Before Evatt's departure from Brisbane, on 1st April, Curtin had been informed that the increased allocation of 715 aircraft to MacArthur by October 1943 would mean that the R.A.A.F. would be kept at 45 squadrons, and consequently the direction to Evatt was that he should endeavour to obtain aircraft for the development of the full limit of the 73 squadrons programme of expansion. Evatt commenced negotiations to this end during April, asking for 474 aeroplanes to equip the additional squadrons. One of the arguments he met was that, because of manpower difficulties, Australia would not be able to man the additional squadrons. The existing position was that, in accordance with the direction of the War Cabinet, training of ground staff had been restricted to the numbers necessary to meet the requirements of 45 squadrons and ancillary units but training facilities existed for meeting increased requirements. The monthly output of trained ground staff had been reduced to 3,000 a month in order to conserve manpower; but if the service were given the men and machines it could step up training to 6,000 a month. Under the Empire Air Scheme about 780 aircrew a month were being turned out with basic training, 415 of them being made available to the Royal Air Force and 365 retained in Australia, while an additional 224 partly trained aircrew were being sent to Canada every month to complete their training. Under

[3] Telegrams from Washington, 6 Apr; and to Washington, 13 Apr 1943.

the recently extended Empire Air Scheme Agreement the United Kingdom Government had approved of the proposal that Australia could retain sufficient aircrew to meet local requirements in accordance with the availability of operational aircraft and the Australian Government interpreted this, in a statement furnished to Evatt, to mean that it had 415 aircrew a month to man additional squadrons of the R.A.A.F. subject only to giving due notice to the United Kingdom Government that it intended to use Empire Air Scheme trainees in the South-West Pacific Area.

Curtin instructed Evatt that there was no question of the ability of the Royal Australian Air Force to man 73 squadrons and that the rate of development depended only on due notice of when aircraft would be available. Thus the decision taken in April 1943 to press for 73 squadrons was a decision on the use of manpower as well as a decision affecting strategy. The Australian Government was ready to allot more manpower to the R.A.A.F. It intended to withhold aircrew from service in the European theatre with the Royal Air Force if aircraft were obtainable in the South-West Pacific.

Another doubt to be dispelled was where aircraft made available to the R.A.A.F. would operate. Australia was ready with the assurance that they would be assigned unreservedly for employment under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area.[4]

The more serious difficulty was that in pressing for 73 squadrons Australia was virtually trying to obtain a revision of the decisions so recently taken by the conference of United States Commanders in the Pacific—decisions which had already considerably increased the air strength of the South-West Pacific Area and, while increasing the American force, consciously limited the R.A.A.F. to 45 squadrons. To the British no less than to the American Chiefs of Staff it appeared that the Australian claim was an indirect way of increasing the total allocation of aircraft to the South-West Pacific Area. On military calculations and having regard to the supply position, a total allocation had been made to the area and the air strength increased by 860, and, from the point of view of the Chiefs of Staff, could not be further increased without affecting the allocation to other theatres. The British in fact offered the suggestion that the R.A.A.F. might be increased at the cost of a corresponding reduction of the United States Air Forces in the area. Evatt rejected the suggestion out of hand. During the better part of two months he continued with great pertinacity, in spite of all the disappointments and through a period of some acute personal anxiety due to the illness of his wife, to work in numerous quarters and by all available means to obtain the aircraft. He himself has said, "I have never worked so hard or so untiringly on anything in my life. Indeed it was the most difficult job I have ever had." On 12th June, almost on the eve of Evatt's departure for Britain to continue his supply mission, Roosevelt approved an allocation of approximately 475

[4] Telegram to Evatt, 20 Apr, and Defence Department file "Expansion of the R.A.A.F. to 73 Squadrons", Apr 1943.

aircraft, in addition to previous commitments, for the purpose of expanding the R.A.A.F. during 1943 and 1944.[5]

Curtin besides expressing appreciation to Roosevelt and Churchill for the decision, sent to Evatt "warmest congratulations on your fine achievement" and said that "the successful accomplishment of this task, in the face of considerable difficulty, is a great service to Australia".

In the event, however, only 132 aircraft were made available to Australia from American production in 1943 as a result of Dr Evatt's appeals and most of these were of types then being superseded.[6] The promise regarding 1944 aircraft production was related to the plans for the expansion of the R.A.A.F. to a total of 73 squadrons. In October 1943, however, when the War Cabinet reviewed the Australian war effort in the light of the manpower position, a limit was placed on recruitment for the R.A.A.F. and, although it was directed that the Australian part in the Empire Air Training Scheme should be directly related to the contemplated strength of the R.A.A.F. in the South-West Pacific Area, the Air Staff estimated that the total force that could be maintained in the South-West Pacific Area was only 53 squadrons. At that time there were in existence 37 operational squadrons, plus 6 transport squadrons and 5 reserve squadrons. A development programme for 53 squadrons was approved by the War Cabinet in May 1944, and was eventually achieved in 1945 with the aid of personnel returning from overseas and by withdrawing R.A.A.F. personnel who were engaged either directly or indirectly in maintenance and other services for the United States Army Air Forces. During 1944 the War Cabinet directed the release of 15,000 from the R.A.A.F. to civil industry.

It was broadly true that up to the middle of 1943 the allocation of aircraft had been the main factor limiting the expansion of the R.A.A.F., but from October 1943 the limit was placed by manpower rather than by lack of aircraft. On Curtin's instructions, Evatt was pressing for aircraft for the 73 squadrons programme at a time when the situation was already changing. Direct danger to Australia having been disposed of by the allocations to the South-West Pacific Area as well as by earlier events in

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[5] Telegram from Evatt, 12 Jun 1943. Leahy, p. 182, says: "A frequent visitor in the late spring was the Australian Minister of Defence, Dr Herbert Evatt, who wanted more planes of various types for the Australian Air Force. Evatt specifically asked me to tell the President of the political difficulties being caused by his government's failure to obtain planes from us. I don't think I gave Dr Evatt much encouragement. We were not giving away planes for votes, although we were providing Australia with such planes as could be spared from other areas where the demands were greater. He spoke with an Australian accent that made it difficult for me to understand despite my having been familiar, forty years before, with the colloquial speech of uneducated inhabitants of Australia. When an ensign of one of our supply ships, I had spent a few months in the area of Sydney and Brisbane." But see *The Roosevelt Letters*, Vol III (1952), p. 467, 15 Jun 1943. In a cordial note of congratulation to Evatt the President wrote: "I, too, am delighted over the result which, by constant pressure, came out of the War Department! I will keep at it to assure deliveries as soon as possible."

[6] The aircraft to be made available from American production in 1943 as a result of Dr Evatt's visit were:

Vengeance	34
Kittyhawk	60
Catalina	12
Shrike	150
Mariner	12
Norseman	14
	282

None of the 150 Shrikes was delivered in 1943 and the original order was reduced to 10, the remainder being declared "surplus to requirements".

the field and on the seas, the claim for aircraft for a larger Australian air force was, in effect, changing in its nature from general advocacy of more aircraft for the Pacific into a decision to throw more of the emphasis of the Australian war effort in the Pacific into the R.A.A.F. It is doubtful whether the Government saw that fact. The nature of the Australian war effort in cooperation with her Allies was already resolving itself into a question of Australian manpower and when, rather belatedly, the Government came to make decisions on manpower it found itself obliged to make them in a way that was not wholly in keeping with the strenuous efforts made a few months earlier to obtain aircraft for 73 squadrons.

Later, in London,[7] after Evatt's discussions, Churchill promised two more Spitfire squadrons, manned by the Royal Air Force, for Australia. Delivery would commence in November 1943. The high allowance for wastage of 180 per annum in the case of the first three squadrons sent to Australia and 84 per annum in the case of the second meant that Australia would be able to rearm an additional squadron with Spitfires.[8]

Because the course of events had removed other arguments the Australian claims for aircraft for 73 squadrons of the R.A.A.F. were very largely arguments on the importance of the whole Pacific theatre and the previous neglect of that theatre. That question was also being considered simultaneously at further talks between Churchill and Roosevelt in Washington on the grand strategy.[9] It would appear to have been a fortuitous coincidence that Evatt, on his aircraft mission, should have been in Washington at the same time, and it does not appear that the Australian Government knew of the impending visit of Churchill until Evatt informed them of it from Washington on 5th May and suggested that he might stay in the capital instead of going on at once to Canada as planned.[1]

Curtin at once saw in the coincidence an opportunity for Australia to put forward a case regarding the situation in Australia and the South-West Pacific and the requirements of that theatre. When he put the idea to MacArthur, however, the Commander-in-Chief (probably with the advantage of superior information from the recent conference of Pacific military commanders) expressed the belief that the Pacific theatre would not figure in the current discussions except in a minor way and that there was not the slightest chance of changing the basic decisions which had made the South-West Pacific a secondary area. "I believe that any injection at this time of the demands of this theatre unless specifically called for, would not only be hopeless of success but might possibly arouse harmful resentment, especially from the London [representatives] who, rightly or wrongly, are unquestionably assuming the prerogative of speaking for the British Empire and who have gone to Washington with a completely-thought-out and crystallised plan in which, so far as the Empire is concerned, all decisions have been made." He said, in effect, that Washington had already

[7] Advisory War Council Minute 1227.

[8] The two squadrons, Nos. 548 and 549, duly arrived in December 1943.

[9] The talks took place between 11th and 26th May and from America Churchill flew to North Africa for 8 days there.

[1] Telegrams from Evatt, 5 May, and from Washington Legation, 11 May 1943.

been informed of his own and Australian views. Dr Evatt was on the spot if needed and it would be better not to attempt to send anything from Australia unless called upon by the conference.[2]

Acting on this advice Curtin informed Evatt that he had decided not to make any submission to Roosevelt and Churchill and added: "It is not required that we inject Australian demands unless they be specifically asked for and I feel that the wise course is to fish for such a request rather than to waken disfavour by a forcible intrusion."[3]

The Roosevelt-Churchill discussions were accompanied by speculative newspaper reports about the attention that was being given to the Pacific and hints that vital decisions regarding future strategy in that region were being made; and newspapers in Australia gave special significance to a statement by Churchill, in the course of a speech to Congress on 19th May, which reasserted the grand strategy, to the effect that Britain and America had agreed to bring the combined power of their air forces to bear upon the military targets and homelands of Japan at the earliest possible moment. In the succeeding days such headlines as "Drive Against Japan Predicted" were used over reports from Washington.[4] The American reports and the Australian presentation of them can only be described as poor journalism.

A long report from Evatt, received on 23rd May, spoke of the growing opinion in favour of the maximum possible concentration against Japan, but most of the authorities he quoted to support that conclusion were selected American newspaper columnists. He observed that Churchill was far keener on Pacific activities than during the previous year, although undoubtedly keeping to his plan of primary concentration against Germany, but he could not quote the war leaders on any definite plan for the Pacific and counselled Curtin to "strike a note of restrained optimism in relation to the Pacific war".[5]

In the following week, however, newspaper reports published in Australia of a press conference which Churchill gave in Washington quoted him in favour of more vigorous action in the Pacific. Various versions of what he said were published in Australia, two of them being: "It is evident that the war against Japan must be prosecuted with the greatest vigour", and "The war will be waged with equal force on both European and Pacific fronts if it continues long enough."[6] Curtin, who does not appear to have had any source of information other than the press, interpreted Churchill as having said that the war in the Pacific would be prosecuted with the same vigour as the war in Europe and made that the text of a press statement issued on 3rd June.

Curtin expressed satisfaction with "the decision of Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt that the war in the Pacific will be prosecuted with the same vigour as the war in Europe". He spoke of this as though it was,

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[2] Letter from MacArthur to Curtin, 13 May 1943.
[3] Telegram to Evatt, 13 May. Advisory War Council Minute 1188, 13 May 1943.
[4] For example, see *Argus* (Melbourne), 22 May 1943.
[5] Telegram from Evatt, 22 May 1943.
[6] Australian metropolitan press 26 and 27 May 1943.

for Australia, "one of the greatest successes of the war". Australia had sought to arouse public opinion and the recent Washington discussions had "absolutely and completely supported the contentions of the Australian Government". He used the same arguments in a speech at Sydney on 6th June. He placed a similar interpretation on Churchill's words in a statement on 10th June and in a broadcast from Australia to the United States on 5th July.[7]

If Curtin's statements were meant to imply, as they seemed to imply, that some major decision affecting operations in the Pacific had recently been made, that there had been a radical change in attitude to war in the Pacific, and that these changes had been in some way due to the influence of the Australian Government, it is extremely doubtful whether the information before Curtin justified him in phrasing the statement in such a way. He had also cabled to Churchill on 3rd June:

> I would like to convey to you on behalf of the Australian people, our appreciation of the deep significance of your public assurance that the war in the Pacific will be prosecuted with the same vigour as the war in Europe.

Churchill replied laconically:

> Thank you very much. See also the summary of the conclusions of the Washington Conference which is being telegraphed to you immediately.[8]

The official summary of conclusions which arrived on the same day made it plain, if it had not been plain before, that the main decision of the President and Churchill had concerned the intensification of the war against Germany including the preparations for the invasion of the Continent. As far as operations for the defeat of Japan were concerned, they had decided to increase strength on the Burma-China front with a view to intensifying air operations against the Japanese in Burma, maintaining supplies to China and preparing for eventual operations; in the Pacific they had decided to undertake air operations in and from China, to eject the Japanese from the Aleutians, to seize the Marshall and Caroline Islands, the Solomons, Bismarck Archipelago and Japanese-held New Guinea, and to intensify operations against enemy lines of communication.[9]

This was a formal acceptance of the idea of a limited offensive and to that extent was in keeping with Australian ideas but it was certainly not a decision to wage the war in the Pacific with as much vigour as the war in Europe, nor was it the direct result of any Australian persuasion. Yet Curtin stuck to his own story.

The continuance of the grand strategy is even more clearly indicated by an appreciation of the probable position in the South-West Pacific which had been given to Evatt in Washington as part of the case against any further expansion of the R.A.A.F. Its starting point was the reassertion of the "agreed strategy" of defeating Germany first and then turning the whole Allied efforts against Japan. In the meantime unremitting pressure

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[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 60, pp. 4-5 and No. 59, pp. 18 and 23.
[8] Telegram to Churchill, 3 Jun, and from Churchill, 5 Jun 1943.
[9] Telegram from Dominions Office, 5 Jun 1943.

would be kept on Japan "to wear down Japanese sea and air power and cause shipping losses while preventing the Japanese from consolidating their positions sufficiently to enable them to stage an offensive themselves". At the same time the Allies would try to occupy positions from which to menace Japanese sea communications. Because of the state of the Japanese forces and the limitations of shipping, Japanese strategy must be defensive with the intention of making her conquests as impregnable as possible. Allied naval strength in the South-West Pacific was only just equal to that of the Japanese but the growing American strength in the Aleutians and the increasing of the American naval forces in the whole Pacific would mean greater Japanese anxiety for the defence of their home waters. The Allied fleets would increase with new construction and the possible release of British ships if Italy could be knocked out. There was a marked superiority of Allied land strength in the South-West Pacific and, even discounting shipping losses, previous experience indicated that it would take nine months for Japan to concentrate in the South and South-West Pacific the nine divisions which Japan might be able to make available for those areas. The Allies, with five Australian divisions being trained for jungle warfare and four American divisions (including two which would be sent to the South-West Pacific Area as reinforcements in the next five months) should be sufficient for the capture of Rabaul and a subsequent advance on Truk, apart from the security of Australia. The Japanese could not make available more than 700 land-based and 150 to 200 carrier-borne aircraft to the South-West Pacific and their forces were being maintained at the present level with difficulty. Even excluding air forces in the South Pacific the Allied strength (1,111 operational aircraft and 135 transport) was already considerably greater than the Japanese strength and by the end of 1943 would be nearly three times as great (2,039 operational and 279 transport).[1]

At this time—June 1943—Curtin appeared to have abandoned the thesis that Australia was in danger of invasion. In a statement on 10th June, after a meeting with MacArthur on the 7th, he said:

> The conclusions of President Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister for the prosecution of the war in the Pacific with the same vigour as the war in Europe have ominous portents for the discomfiture of the Japanese.
>
> The holding war imposed on us under circumstances of great difficulty has been an obligation under global strategy which has been discharged. As in the case of Britain, we had a close call at one stage. The Battle of the Coral Sea was a deliverance and the return of the Australian Imperial Force enabled us to stop the Japanese advance in New Guinea just in time.
>
> I do not think the enemy can now invade this country. We have proved that with the resources we have had, together with the command of the sea established by the gallant United States Navy by decisive victories at Midway Island and the Solomon Islands. We are not yet immune from marauding raids which may cause much damage and loss. I believe, however, that we can hold Australia as a base from which to launch both limited and major offensives against Japan. This

[1] Telegram from Evatt, 12 Jun 1943.

conception must be the pattern to govern the nature and extent of Australia's war effort, as part of the plan of the United Nations in the Pacific.[2]

That statement epitomised the Prime Minister's view of what had been happening over the past year and sketched what should be done next. He elaborated both themes in a statement to Parliament on 22nd June: "The stage has now been reached when it can be said that the battle of Australia has as asssuredly been won as has the battle for Britain. That does not mean that the war in the Pacific has not yet to be won; but it does mean that the security of Australia as the base for the concentration and development of offensive power has been assured."

He reviewed the circumstances when Japan struck and said that the Government sought to achieve three objectives—the establishment of appropriate machinery for the higher direction of the war in the Pacific; the vesting of the strategical control of the South-West Pacific Area in the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Washington; and the appointment of a Supreme Commander in the South-West Pacific Area. Simultaneously it sought to augment the strength of forces in the South-West Pacific Area, and "as a correlative to this, it urged that global strategy and the decision to defeat Germany first should be varied in its relation to the Pacific, so as to prevent the enemy from becoming so firmly entrenched in the conquered territories that the task of ejecting him would be intolerably long and costly".[3]

The exactness of this review can be tested by the account of the Government's activities given above. Curtin's statement certainly summarises the main subjects on which Australia had sought to make her opinions prevail over those of her more powerful Allies. The final statement is a fair description of the point of view the Australian Government had reached in early 1943 in its quest for reinforcements, but earlier, when they were still fearing invasion and when they were still strongly criticising the grand strategy, such an argument was not used.

Curtin encountered some criticism, wholly of a partisan kind, for having announced that Australia was free from danger, it being implied that he had done so simply for the credit that might accrue to his Government in the impending election. In fact his announcement was not by any means precipitate. Rather the recognition of the turning-point in the fortunes of war had been delayed overlong. Nevertheless, that being the mind of the Prime Minister and the Government, June 1943 becomes a significant month in the conduct of the war. Henceforward it may be expected that Government decisions will be made on the assumption, not that Australia is fighting for the security of its homeland, but that it is participating in a global war. That month, too, marks the peak of the total number of men being maintained by Australia in the three services. The total had reached close on 640,000 men.

What does not seem to have been clearly recognised by the War Cabinet

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[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 59, pp. 23-4. Yet in later statements the Prime Minister said that the danger of invasion had "decreased" and not that it had ended.

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 60, pp. 25-6.

at the time was that already the Curtin Government had entered on a course and was helping to create a situation in which the scope of any future decisions about Australian participation in the war would be narrowly limited.[4]

The actions of the Government between April 1942 and June 1943 are the ones on which its reputation for wartime leadership will mainly rest in the future. A sense of urgency in face of great danger appears to have been the strongest influence on Curtin's own mind during this period. A critic, looking at events with a knowledge of the eventual Allied victory, might question whether the Prime Minister saw the nature of the military situation steadily and whether he saw it whole. The critic might also ask whether Curtin had appreciated the facts of the relationship between Australia and her two great allies. But Curtin was not looking at a burning building; he was inside it. A critic might also point to some chopping and changing in argument and some signs of uncertainty in the response to the ups and downs of war news or to variations in advice. But Curtin himself had one desperate rule: "We are therefore determined that Australia shall not go." The critic might point to some appearance of uncertainty in the way in which the Prime Minister sometimes spoke of an "offensive" strategy and sometimes of the "defensive" and in the changes from a "regional" to a "global" approach. But on most of the quotable occasions Curtin was grasping arguments to convince others to do more to make Australia safe rather than shaping a thesis. In making judgments on his public statements it needs to be remembered, too, that, through it all, Curtin and his colleagues felt, rightly or wrongly, that the people of Australia had to be aroused to their peril and alarmed into action.

If any attempt were to be made to develop the thesis that Curtin did in fact have a clear, consistent and firm view throughout this period about the nature of the Australian war effort, such an attempt could only lead to the conclusion that he had already decided in his own mind to advance the policy which emerged from the political manoeuvring in 1942 and 1943 over the so-called "conscription" issue. At the end of that controversy, before the middle of 1943, it was clear that Curtin had chosen a limited operational role for Australian troops, confining the overseas service of the main body of troops to the defence of Australia in a zone less extensive than the South-West Pacific Area; and necessarily restricting the participation of Australian land forces in any offensive that the Allies might mount. Such an argument would credit him with choosing that Australia should be a well-defended base. It is highly doubtful, however, whether his views were as clear and his purpose as definite as that during the critical days of 1942.[5]

[4] This theme is developed more fully in relationship to manpower difficulties in Chapter 6 of the present volume.

[5] For a fuller discussion of the "conscription" issue, see Chapter 6, Section 3, below.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANISED FOR TOTAL WAR, APRIL 1942-JUNE 1943

1—THE COMING OF THE AMERICANS

THE extent of the changes which took place in Australia during 1942 and the early part of 1943 can be illustrated by a few figures. The number of persons engaged in direct war work, including those in the forces, grew from 554,000 men and boys and 74,800 women and girls at the outbreak of war in the Pacific to 1,172,000 and 184,500 in March 1943. The change was brought about mainly by diversion from one occupation to another for, by December 1941, there was little male labour left unoccupied and up to March 1943 there was only a limited call on the untapped reserves of women workers. The total number (including the forces) of occupied men and boys rose from 2,408,000 to 2,518,000 and of occupied women from 738,000 to 823,000 from December 1941 to March 1943, and most of that gain in the labour forces could be accounted for as the normal annual increase.

The number of men in the defence services (using the figures for gross enlistments) rose from 431,300 to 820,500 and of women from 3,600 to 40,260; the numbers in government and semi-governmental munitions, shipbuilding and aircraft works rose from 59,700 men to 92,000 and from 11,200 women to 38,200. In other defence works there were in March 1943 320,000 men and 106,000 women, and although the figures in December 1941 had not been recorded, it was officially estimated that the increase in this case had been 220,000 men and 46,000 women. The numbers engaged in production for civil use in factories fell from 376,000 men to 118,000 and from an estimate of 128,000 women to 82,000—a total diversion of over 300,000 workers. The number of men engaged in rural industry fell by 40,000 to a total of 355,000 but the number of women rose by 25,000 to 55,000.[1] There were also, in March 1943, 48,600 men working for the Allied Works Council on various construction jobs for the Allied forces in Australia.

The fact that by the end of March 1943 the initial process of diversion of manpower had been almost completed is shown in a comparison with the figures for 30th June 1943. During the April-June quarter the number of men and boys in direct war work rose by only 9,000. The number of men in the defence services rose by nearly 22,000 as the result of taking most of the eligible men from maturing age groups and a further raking over of industry and civil services. The number of occupied women rose during the quarter by 17,000, about 4,500 of them going into the defence services and the others replacing men in civil occupations. The Government, reporting in June 1943 that 89.6 per cent of the total number of

[1] A major reduction in rural industry had occurred up to December 1941 by which time it was estimated that men in rural industry had fallen from 500,000 to 395,000.

males over 14 years of age were fighting, doing direct war work or in essential civilian jobs, said: "Australia's manpower is fully mobilised." The missing 294,000 men and boys were made up of the sick or incapacitated, the very old, schoolboys and students. The comparable figure for women was 29.9 per cent and the Government said: "Much has already been done to mobilise female labour. More will be done."

The figures quoted show clearly that in this diversion of over 600,000 men and nearly 120,000 women to war work in the course of seven months, the defence services had received first preference. Over 400,000 men and 40,000 women had been put into military uniform. Factories producing for civil use had lost 260,000 men and nearly 50,000 women; commerce and finance had lost 84,000 men and 2,000 women; in transport and communications, which were meeting increased demands, about 9,000 men had been replaced by about 13,000 women; and about 40,000 men had been taken out of rural industry, and the gap had not been filled by the employment of 30,000 women.[2] At the same time defence works of various kinds, both in factories and on constructional jobs, had received a quarter of a million new recruits.

The extent of the increase in the war effort can also be illustrated by the figures for governmental expenditure. Defence and war expenditure under the Federal Budget in the financial year July 1941 to June 1942 totalled £308,000,000 compared with £170,000,000 in the financial year 1940-41; and for the year ending 30th June 1943 it totalled £537,000,000. Expressed as a percentage of national income the defence and war expenditure rose from 11 per cent in 1940-41 to 29 per cent in 1941-42 and to 43 per cent in 1942-43.

The diversion indicated by these figures was not uniform throughout Australia. The increase in factory employment was slight in Western Australia and did not occur at all in Queensland. It was most marked in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. In enlistments in the armed services Western Australia was in a class apart from the rest of Australia, the figures up to April 1943 per thousand of population being 281 men and 19 women, whereas the next best figures in each case were 195 men from Victoria and 11 women from Queensland. The figures for New South Wales were 176 men and 8 women per thousand of population. In addition the outlying States contributed recruits to employment in defence works in other States. Queensland and Western Australia both suffered a net loss on the migration figures for 1942 and 1943. The diversion was also not uniform over all occupations. The clerk, the shop assistant, the self-employed person, and, in general, the soft-handed workers, whether men or women, experienced more changes in occupation and mode of life than the skilled tradesman or the labourer who, in general, were required to go on serving in their customary occupations.

The figures which have been quoted give a picture of an increased war effort and of great change in the life of the nation. For the individual

[2] The figures quoted are taken from a contemporary publication *Facts and Figures of Australia at War* (No. 1, June 1943, and No. 2, September 1943) issued by the Commonwealth Department of Information.

citizen there was change of occupation, change of abode, change in habit of life. Many customary amenities, services and supplies disappeared. Many new restrictions were imposed and many unaccustomed demands were made. Spending power was increased and was moving into new hands. Retail prices which had been kept down below a 10 per cent increase in the first two years of war shot up in the next 18 monthes to 25 per cent above pre-war level until, in April 1943, an upper limit was fixed, followed necessarily in July by the introduction of subsidies in order that this price ceiling might be maintained. Income taxes took more than four-fifths of high incomes from personal exertion, about a third of the earnings of people in the so-called "middle income" group, and about a tenth of the average wage. Indirect taxes had also greatly increased. An appeal was also made to patriotic duty to subscribe to war loans or to buy war savings certificates. Between March 1942 and June 1943 £295,000,000 was raised in Commonwealth loans from Australian subscribers, but in the two big loan campaigns for £100,000,000 each, after allowing for the major subscriptions placed by financial institutions, only about one in eight of occupied persons became a direct subscriber.[3] Savings bank deposits showed an increase of about £11 per head of population during the same period, but the number of accounts showed no marked increase. The suggestion is that a thrifty few were saving, that many were finding that heavier taxation and higher prices left them no surplus, but (having regard to the fact that the index number of real wages, which had risen slightly since the beginning of the war now began to rise more sharply and to the fact that there was constant employment) a considerable number of wage earners, not numbered among the thrifty few, must have been spending more money on more things than they had usually done. Even in superficial observation, it was obvious to any traveller that there was much unrestrained spending in the cities on amusements and a new lavishness in the making of bets, not in coins but in banknotes.[4] The political leaders complained frequently during this period of extravagance and luxury spending and they no longer made the complaints, as they had formerly done, about some small privileged group but about the general populace, including the average wage-earner.

For the Government there was added responsibility: a great growth in the tasks of administration, the assumption of many new controls, and

[3] Some companies made arrangements for employees to purchase bonds and savings certificates by the payment of small amounts deducted each week from wages.

[4] Totalisator Investments (estimated from taxes on totalisators) for the war years were:

Year ended 30 Jun	N.S.W.	Vic	Qld	£'000 S.A.	W.A.	Tas	Total
1939	1,731	2,732	722	630	762	339	6,916
1940	1,908	2,901	687	564	689	338	7,087
1941	2,223	3,133	597	622	646	357	7,578
1942	1,962	3,490	452	315(x)	641	362	7,222
1943	2,377	3,604	457	(x)	864	403	7,705
1944	4,664	4,727	851	1,011	1,439	596	13,288
1945	5,803	6,374	1,145	1,954	1,583	787	17,646

(x) Racing was banned in South Australia from 28 Feb 1942 to 29 Oct 1943.

(Extract from *Finance Bulletin*, No. 39, p. 151.) An Australian record of £135,271 was established at the Melbourne Cup meeting (Flemington, Victoria) in 1941; this was broken by the turnover at Derby Day, Sydney, on 18th October 1943 (£155,207/10/-), and yet again a week later at Flemington (£161,862/10/-), and again on 15th November 1943 at Flemington (Melbourne Cup meeting) £177,733/10/-.

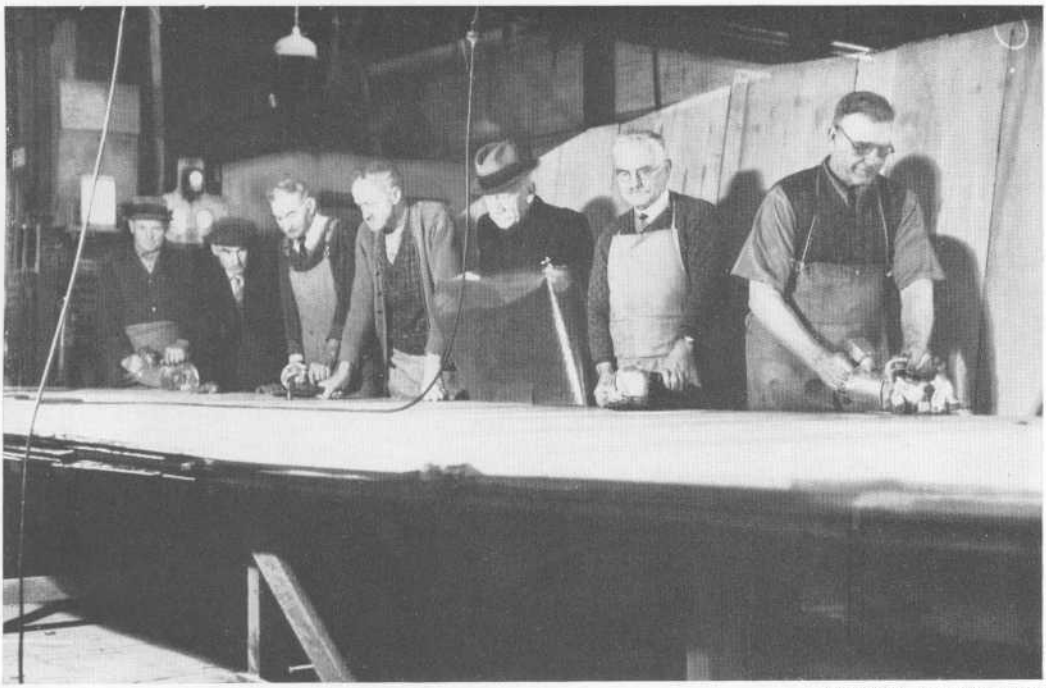
the making of plans covering a far wider range of activities. The numbers of Commonwealth public servants under the control of the Public Service Board soared from less than 60,000 at the end of 1941 to over 80,000 in June 1943, and the increase in employment outside the jurisdiction of the board was even greater. New instrumentalities were created and novel processes were introduced into administration. National Security Regulations and Orders made under them were multiplied. The index to the Manual of National Security Legislation was doubled in length as the result of regulations and orders issued between the outbreak of the war with Japan and April 1943.

It is the purpose of the present chapter to consider those aspects of administration, industry and social change which were most directly related to the political life of Australia.

It remains to mention one other development during 1942 and early 1943 which added to and complicated both the administrative and social problems before the Australian Government. This was the coming of the Americans.

By June 1942 there were about 88,000 American troops in Australia, not including the navy. At that time about a third of the American land forces were in Victoria, about a third in Queensland and most of the remainder in South Australia, with smaller groups in the Northern Territory and New South Wales and a handful in Perth, which both then and later had a scant acquaintance with American land forces but saw a good deal of men from the navy. The air corps was mostly in the north. Month by month the total in Australia and New Guinea grew—99,000 by the end of August; 107,000 by the end of November; 125,000 by the end of January 1943; 160,000 by the end of April; 200,000 by the end of June. The disposition of these forces varied considerably. By August 1942 about two-thirds of the total American land forces were around Brisbane and about half of the remainder in other parts of Queensland. In September 1942 the first American infantry moved into New Guinea (the American air force had been there since March). During the first half of 1943, although about three-quarters of the total were still in the north, the decision to rest the 1st Marine Division near Melbourne, after its service at Guadalcanal, had again brought substantial numbers to the neighbourhood of Melbourne, and new arrivals swelled the numbers around Sydney. In general, however, the two larger cities knew the Americans chiefly as transient troops while Queensland knew them in much larger numbers as troops in training or in occupation of permanent encampments or quarters. Brisbane, the site of the American General Headquarters since July 1942, and northern coastal towns such as Rockhampton and Townsville, were possessed by the Americans in a manner and on a scale quite different from that experienced in any other part of Australia.

The United States naval personnel stationed ashore in Australia totalled less than 2,000 at the end of 1942 and rose to a wartime peak of 14,300 in December 1943. In addition there was the coming and going of vessels



Australian War Memorial

A group of over-age and retired men, called back to work to help alleviate the manpower shortage, working on the construction of an Avro-Anson mainplane in a Melbourne factory.



Australian War Memorial

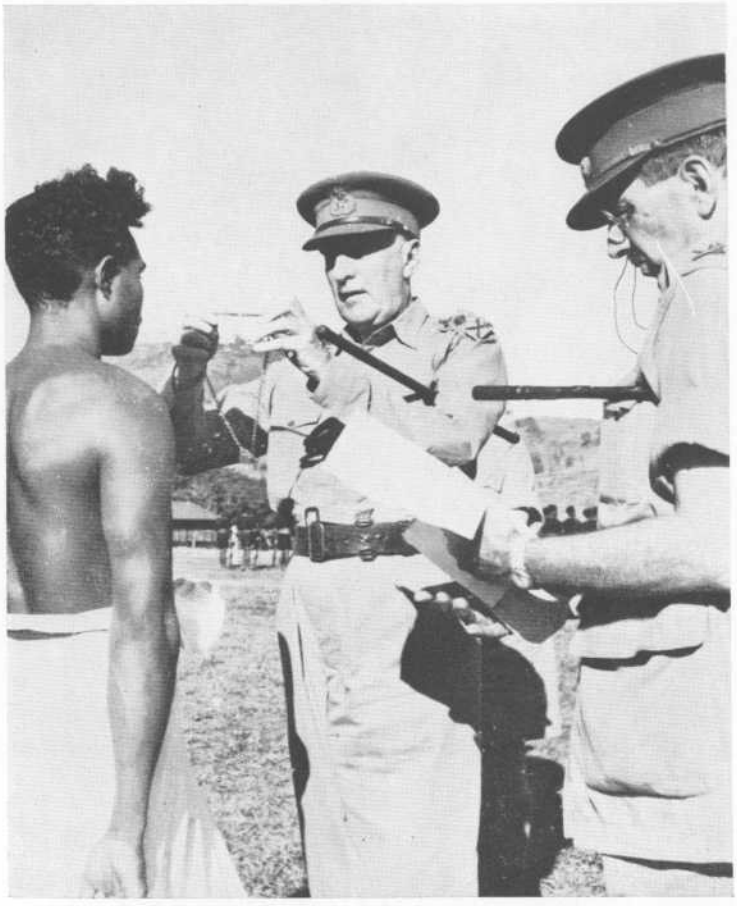
Members of the A.I.F. picking fruit in an orchard at Shepparton, Victoria. These men had volunteered for the work while awaiting their draft overseas. The manpower shortage was also alleviated from time to time by granting qualified servicemen leave without pay to meet the seasonal demands of rural industries.





Australian War Memorial

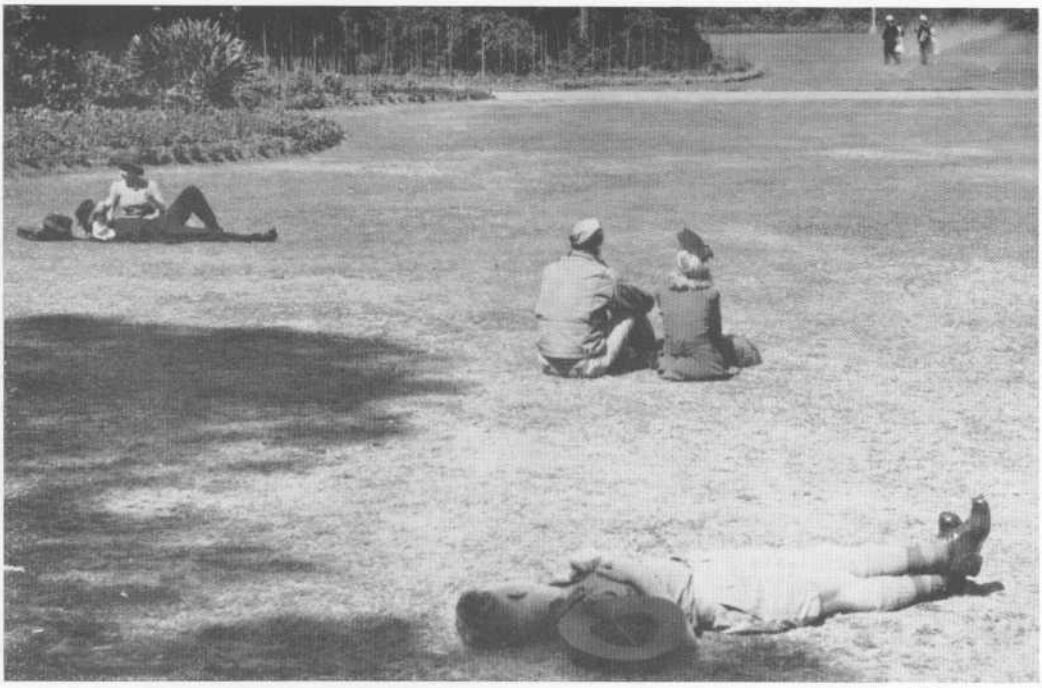
Housewives doing their weekend shopping at Prahran, Victoria, on 6th July 1943. One section of the community on whom the burden of war pressed most heavily was the housewife. Absence of menfolk, shortages of transport and rationing of goods frequently forced her into the role of the tired packhorse, often combined with the dual responsibility of mother and father to a growing family.





Australian War Memorial

The wartime Governors-General of Australia were Lord Gowrie, V.C., and the Duke of Gloucester. Lord Gowrie travelled widely throughout Australia and the Territories during his term in office. He is shown here (with Major-General B. M. Morris) at Port Moresby, on 27th May 1943, presenting the Loyal Service Medal to Vari of Saroa, a village near Buna. The Duke of Gloucester, who succeeded Lord Gowrie in January 1945, is shown with Captain J. M. Armstrong on board H.M.A.S. *Australia* inspecting the wreckage of a *Kamikaze* aircraft which crashed the ship during the Philippines operations.



Australian War Memorial

A park scene in Melbourne. The coming of the Americans, gregarious and "well-heeled" by Australian standards, was generally welcomed. But there were disturbances at times between Australian and American servicemen, the chief contributing factors usually being drunkenness, discrimination in favour of Americans in shops and hotels and by taxi drivers, the spectacle of American troops with Australian girls, and sometimes American boastfulness.



Australian War Memorial

The American Red Cross took over a hotel in Mackay, Queensland, as its headquarters and to accommodate men on leave. The taking over of public and other buildings by the American services to accommodate headquarters and other units and as leave and transit centres was a process that was repeated fairly widely throughout Australia.

of the fleet, mainly to Fremantle and Sydney and the consequential swelling of the numbers by shore leave.

The American forces created new demands which were hard to foresee with exactness—demands for new administrative machinery; for labour and materials for construction of aerodromes, storerooms, camps and other facilities; for accommodation, for office space, for camp sites, for hostels, for telephones and a share of all similar internal services; for locally-engaged office staffs; for food and for local supplies of many kinds. They brought much into the country with them; the Australian Government only gradually realised how much forces rising eventually to a total of 863,000 in June 1945 would also demand from the country.[5]

That demand stretched out into the community at large. Besides the truckloads of timber or meat, or the acres of ground, or the thousands of labourers which the Government procured to meet American needs, the civilian community became conscious of the demand for a share in the fun, the seats at the cinema, the restaurant or the taxi-cab, the demand for companionship for the soldier on leave, the claim on recreation.[6] Thus the coming of the Americans was one of the influences shaping both the economic and social situation which the Government had to meet, as well as a new element to be taken into account in the day by day tasks of conducting the war effort.

First and foremost an ally, the Americans were welcome in Australia both for the aid they brought in a time of danger and for the perpetual assurance given by their presence that the United States was committed to the defence of Australia. It was the first time in history that Australia had the reassurance of the presence of a great ally on her own territory. Since the establishment of a separate Australian Navy, not even the Royal Navy, on which Australia had relied so long and so completely for her security, had ever appeared in Australia on anything but a token cruise.

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[5] According to the figures in the Chiefs of Staff Reports to the War Cabinet, beginning with 4,600 in January 1942 the total United States Army and Air Corps forces in the SWPA rose as follows:

Jun	1942	88,569
Dec	1942	106,388
Jun	1943	178,207
Dec	1943	323,476
Jun	1944	510,636
Dec	1944	757,744
Jun	1945	862,737

The Air Corps rose from 29,000 in June 1942 to 162,000 in June 1945.

The numbers of United States army people actually in Australia rose to 120,000 at the end of September 1943, and there were in addition the unreported numbers of Air Corps.

The first mention of United States Army men in New Guinea is 823 service troops at the beginning of May 1942. The major reduction in the army in Australia occurred in the last quarter of 1943 and first quarter of 1944. There were about 55,000 in Australia in June 1944, descending to a mere 5,600 by June 1945.

[6] Taking into account his overseas and subsistence allowances, an American soldier in the lower ranks had roughly twice the spending power of an Australian of equivalent rank. For example, an American Pfc received about £17 a month. An Australian private, paid 6/6 a day, received £9 15s in a 30-day month. The disparity between the pays increased with rank. Some American Army monthly rates of pay, with the pay received by an Australian of equivalent rank shown in parentheses, were: Sgt, £32 (£17 5s); 1st Lt, £63 (£29 15s); Capt £74 (£36 15s); Maj, £106 (£44 15s); Lt-Col, £141 (£51).

The American soldier's reputation as a free spender, particularly in 1942, was probably based not only on the higher pay he received, but also on his ignorance of the Australian currency. During this period the sight of an American serviceman making payment by trustingly holding out a handful of coins was common. No doubt many Australians were scrupulously honest in such transactions, but in a community with a reputation for hard-headedness not altogether unearned, more than a few would have exploited the Americans' ignorance. Their reputation as free spenders often won the Americans more than their share of the available amenities and this was frequently a cause of resentment.



"Wot'll you do, Cabby, when the Yanks go?"
"Wot'll YOU *do, sister?"*

Rufus Morris in Bulletin *(Sydney) 11 Oct 1944*



"Look, Bert; and no Yanks about!"

Norm Rice in Bulletin *(Sydney) 23 Dec 1942*

Two cartoon commentaries on the way in which the American soldiers, with money to spend, had priority of services and favours. The second cartoon recalls the wartime story of an American soldier boasting that the Americans had pinched all the girls from the Australians, and the reply of the Australian: "You didn't pinch our girls. You helped us sort them out."

Government and people were eager to prove that Australia was also a good friend and a worthy ally.

2—THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

With the extension of the war to the Pacific new administrative problems faced the Australian Government. Reference has already been made to the higher strategical control of the war and the creation of a Supreme Command in the South-West Pacific, the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington and London, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington and the Pacific War Councils in London and in Washington. These were supplemented by a Combined Raw Materials Board, a Combined Shipping Adjustment Board and a Munitions Assignment Board, in Washington, with parallel bodies in London. The boards examined claims from various theatres of war. In practice, any major Australian claims for munitions or materials from overseas and, what was sometimes even more decisive, of shipping to carry them depended on the determinations of these boards formed by American and United Kingdom representatives. In June 1942 the system was completed with a Combined Food Board and a Combined Production and Resources Board.

At the same time as it attempted to obtain direct representation on the higher inter-Allied councils and objected to having to put its case indirectly through the United Kingdom, the Australian Government, making the best of as many worlds as possible, retained its courtesy membership of the United Kingdom War Cabinet and was active on that body in the discussion of war policy. Sir Earle Page relinquished his position as Australian Accredited Representative in June 1942 and subsequently returned to Australia to resume his parliamentary duties. Dr Evatt had sat as representative during his visit to London in May 1942. In June Mr Bruce, Australian High Commissioner in London, was appointed Accredited Representative of Australia on the United Kingdom War Cabinet and the Pacific War Council in London, most of his other duties being taken over by Mr Duncan[7] as Deputy High Commissioner. In the hands of Bruce, whose great capacity was reinforced by the respect he enjoyed and the authority of his long experience in high office, the arrangement for Australian admission to the War Cabinet of another country was raised to the full stature of the original idea. Australian interests were maintained at a centre where major decisions were being made, and, more than that, Australia made its own contribution to the higher conduct of the war as it affected the whole British Commonwealth of Nations. From private conversations with persons directly concerned it would appear that, in the United Kingdom War Cabinet, Bruce was more than an effective representative of Australia. He became, in an unusual way, an influential participant in the conduct of the war.

At Washington there was no possibility of any like success. The peculiar

[7] J. S. Duncan, CBE. Deputy Director, Posts and Telegraphs NSW 1935-38; Aust Official Secretary, London, 1938-42, Deputy High Commissioner 1942-46; Aust Minister to Chile 1946-48. B. Newcastle, NSW, 19 Aug 1886. Died 8 Mar 1949.

and intimate understanding that exists between the autonomous members of the British Commonwealth of Nations and a person with the entrance that Bruce had in London was lacking. The constitutional improvisation which a British Prime Minister could simply announce to the House of Commons was legally and politically impossible in the United States. Furthermore, so far as Australia was understood, either in the White House or in Congress, to be an independent and autonomous belligerent, she was only one among many Allies of the second rank, most of whom would have liked to be in the inner councils. Participation in the higher direction of the war could not be extended beyond the Roosevelt-Churchill conferences and the work of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and, in those arrangements, the United States much preferred that Great Britain should be able to speak for all British countries. Even in the case of Canada, more intimately linked in strategic interest with the United States than any other nation, separate and special arrangements only extended to joint defence matters between the two countries and not to the conduct of the war. In Washington therefore Australia had to make her impression or try to obtain acceptance of her views either through the Pacific War Council or by the importunity of her Minister for External Affairs on his visits overseas.

The Pacific War Council, as already indicated, did not fulfil the hopes that Curtin and Evatt had of it. Sir Owen Dixon,[8] successor to Casey as Australian Minister at Washington, summed up his experience as Australian representative on it when he returned to Australia for consultations in 1943: "The Pacific War Council was not an effective body," he told the Advisory War Council. "It provided an opportunity to inspect the mind of the President, but it had no other advantage. It was a civilian body and the President never used it for discussion of strategical questions. The President gave no information about naval or military activities except in relation to past events." To the War Cabinet he added: "It was the practice of the President to make a general statement to the Council at each meeting, but he always avoided critical issues. Discussion afterwards was in relation to any matters that members themselves wished to raise. No agenda were submitted and no minutes were kept. . . . The advantage of the Council was that it enabled the views of the nations represented to be kept prominently before the President." From his experience the Minister thought that better results could be obtained on any occasion by presenting a detailed and closely-reasoned statement of Australia's case before the United States Chiefs of Staff.[9]

The cabled reports sent to Australia of meetings of the Pacific War Council confirm this account of its activities.

As for the visits of Evatt to Washington, it is difficult to find any convincing evidence that at any time they influenced the higher conduct of the war. Reference has already been made to the Minister's success

[8] Rt Hon Sir Owen Dixon, OM, GCMG. Justice of High Court of Aust 1929-52, Chief Justice 1952-64; Chairman, Central Wool Cttee 1940-42, Shipping Control Bd 1941-42; Aust Minister to Washington 1942-44. B. Hawthorn, Vic, 28 Apr 1886.

[9] War Cabinet Minute 2813, 12 May 1943; Advisory War Council Minute 1187, 13 May 1943.

in obtaining an allocation of aircraft to Australia. Undoubtedly, too, coming as a welcome reinforcement to sections of American opinion which considered that the Pacific was being neglected, he helped to stir up in press and platform a greater awareness of the claims of that theatre and probably, by his insistence on these claims, brought high officials to give more attention to them than they would otherwise have done.[1] No advocacy could have been pressed with more determination. Yet, if it is asked whether Australia made any contribution to the shaping of higher strategy in Washington or brought about any significant change in policies which had been already shaped, the answer must be that she did not, and further, that all the importunity in Washington was a less effective contribution to the conduct of the war than the steady membership of the United Kingdom War Cabinet.

Turning to consider the arrangements made inside Australia, it will be seen at once that the creation of the South-West Pacific Command and the coming of considerable American naval, land and air forces into the command and into the adjacent South Pacific Command also presented to the Australian Government the need for devising new machinery and methods for working together with her allies, for increasing the Australian contribution and for directing it into the most useful channels.

One question was consultation, within the South-West Pacific Command, on the highest strategical questions. In practical terms this meant such consultation as would enable the Australian Government to appreciate with exactness the war situation and the tasks to which its armed forces and Australian resources might be committed; to offer its own views in the light of its own opinion of what Australia could and should do; and to form a central purpose in keeping with which the War Cabinet could determine the nature and extent of the Australian war effort from time to time. This need was served by direct consultation between Curtin and MacArthur. The Prime Minister and the Supreme Commander never found any difficulty in working together. Their unrecorded private talks, arranged as occasion arose, usually by Shedden, settled most of the higher questions of the cooperation of Australia and the United States as allies in the South-West Pacific Area and settled them smoothly, promptly, and with perfect understanding. Some attempt to give formality to this arrangement was made with the announcement to Parliament that a "Prime Minister's War Conference", consisting of the Prime Minister, MacArthur and such Ministers and officers as the Prime Minister might summon to attend, had been set up "to deal with the highest strategical questions", but though the term was used for a time it dropped into disuse with the growing informality that became possible with growing confidence between the two leaders.[2]

On the Australian side, Curtin also made some adjustments to meet the

[1] The Australian accounts of these missions rate the effect high but published American sources give them scant recognition. See R. E. Sherwood, *The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins*, Vol II (1949); R. E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (1950); W. D. Leahy, *I Was There*; W. Millis (Editor), *The Forrestal Diaries* (1951); *The Roosevelt Letters*, Vol III.

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 601, and *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 30, p. 22.

new conditions. On 14th April he changed the title of his portfolio and his department from Defence Coordination to Defence, indicating that his functions in regard to defence and joint service questions would embrace "a wider scope" as he would be the link between the Government and the Supreme Commander and the channel of communication to and from the Australian representatives on the British War Cabinet and Pacific Councils in London and Washington. Questions of Australian defence policy and important subjects such as the strength and organisation of the forces and appointments to higher posts would, in future, be submitted to the War Cabinet through the Minister for Defence, and this arrangement would also provide an opportunity, where appropriate, for discussion on such subjects with the Supreme Commander.[3] The Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Defence Committee combined to be the Government's advisory bodies on service questions. With the appointment of Blamey as Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Army and Commander of Allied Land Forces, an additional opportunity for liaison and an additional source of advice was created, Blamey having responsibilities both to the Australian Government and to the Allied General Headquarters.

Besides the arrangements for consultations on higher policy within the South-West Pacific Area, the new conditions called for exceptional measures to interlock the Australian war effort and the remainder of the Allied war effort in this theatre. The Government saw this as two problems —one, making arrangements for the convenience of the Americans and for carrying out the works or providing the supplies which they required from Australia and, the other, organising the Australian war effort to give bigger forces, more munitions and higher production of essential goods. At the same time they were giving attention to a separate problem of procuring from overseas for Australian use such supplies as Australia could not produce for herself. Necessarily, to get the work done quickly, it was carried out urgently in separate compartments and hence it took some time to realise how closely related were all these activities when they were considered as a total war effort. The number of men in the fighting services, the increase in production, the services provided for the Americans, the goods obtained from overseas all had a bearing on each other. To take only one instance: if the Americans provided more services for themselves Australia might be able to produce more supplies. Someone at some time should be able to say what it would be best to do in the interests of the total Allied effort in this theatre. For a start, however, enthusiasm and a determination not to spare themselves drove each Minister and each department headlong to their respective tasks.

First, the Americans should be made to feel at home and given the run of the house. Before the South-West Pacific Command had been created and while the number of Americans in Australia was small, joint planning machinery both for operations and administration was created in a manner which brought the American Chief of Staff on the same footing as the three Australian Chiefs of Staff as though he were at the

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 25, p. 22.

head of a fourth arm of the services.[4] As part of this machinery an Administrative Planning Committee was created "to assist the Americans in obtaining through the appropriate departments as speedily as possible the fulfilment of their needs". It was composed of representatives of the three Australian services and the United States Army with Mr J. P. Abbott, M.P., as Commonwealth Government representative and chairman. Representatives of the appropriate Commonwealth civil departments were added to sub-committees dealing with works, quartering, movements, supplies and hospitals. The chairman was made responsible to the Prime Minister and given direct access to other Ministers and departments in respect of American requirements.[5] Requests from the Americans were sent to the Administrative Planning Committee which, if necessary, called conferences or arranged informal discussions among the departments which would be concerned in carrying out the project.[6]

Its most important task was in initiating work on Australian-American defence projects such as aerodromes, roads, railways, naval works, camps and the construction of stores at a total estimated cost of £30,000,000. As this work multiplied it made the representations to the Prime Minister which resulted in the formation of the Allied Works Council.

The Movements Sub-Committee facilitated the clearing of incoming defence cargoes and arranged storage and internal transport where necessary. It ensured the provision of petrol and oils for the American forces in Australia and the construction of bulk tanks. The admission of American sick to Australian hospitals and later the setting up of American hospitals were arranged. The committee helped to smooth out difficulties both in big matters, such as overlapping of the plans of the American forces and Australian departments, and in numerous smaller ways, such as obtaining exemptions for the Americans from taxation, customs and excise duties, and port dues, and extending post, telegraph and cable concessions to the troops.

As the situation changed with the creation of the South-West Pacific Command, the growing urgency of demands and the great increase in the American demands on Australia, other instrumentalities were created and there was a growing practice of dealing directly with the department or the service chiefly concerned without using the good offices of the Administrative Planning Committee—a disposition which was encouraged by departments eager to take their own place in the stir and bustle of the day. The committee presented its final report on 30th April, saying that the purpose for which it had been created appeared to have been fulfilled.

One of the most pressing demands on Australia was for the construction of works. From the middle of September 1939, the demand for works had been growing. Before the war the Commonwealth constructional autho-

[4] War Cabinet Minute 1659 and Advisory War Council Minute 642, 5 Jan 1942; War Cabinet Agendum 6/1942.

[5] War Cabinet Minute 1693, 13 Jan 1942.

[6] See also Chapter 7, Section 5 below, and Appendix 8.

rities had handled an annual expenditure of about £2,000,000. In the financial year 1939-40 this shot up to £9,000,000; in 1940-41 to £20,000,000 and in 1941-42 to £32,000,000. The Administrative Planning Committee, after a month's experience of the unprecedented demands for new works in January 1942, saw the need and made representations to the Prime Minister. On 17th February, at the same meeting at which it decided on "total mobilisation" and the issuing of the Mobilisation of Services and Property Regulations, the Full Cabinet decided to create an Allied Works Council. Mr Theodore,[6] a former Labour Party Member of Parliament, one-time Premier of Queensland and one-time Federal Treasurer, who had left politics and successfully devoted his enormous driving force and knowledge to making money, was appointed Director-General of Allied Works, the two other members of the Council being Mr Hoy,[7] who had hitherto been Commonwealth Director-General of Works in the Department of the Interior, and a nominee of the Commanding General of the United States Army Forces in Australia. The decision was carried into effect with National Security (Allied Works) Regulations.[8] Announcing the new arrangement, the Prime Minister said that the Director-General would have the direction and control of the carrying out of works of whatever nature required for war purposes by the Allied forces in Australia; the securing of supplies of materials, plant, tools and equipment for the pruposes of such works; the employment of technicians, workmen and others for the purposes of such works, and the transport, accommodation and provisioning of such workmen and others. He was given power, acting for the Commonwealth and subject to any direction the Minister for the Interior might give, to make and vary contracts or agreements; to employ persons; to direct any contractor with the Commonwealth as to the manner of carrying out the work for which he had contracted; to requisition or compulsorily acquire any property (other than land), including exclusive rights or licences and privileges; and to buy and sell.[9]

The directive given to Theodore by the Prime Minister on 25th February stated that, although the Director-General was directly responsible to the Minister for the Interior, he had the right of direct access to the Prime Minister. He was also empowered to authorise expenditure in an emergency up to a limit of £250,000 without waiting for prior ministerial approval. The council was enjoined to work in close collaboration with the Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities which were charged with responsibility for the control of manpower, materials and equipment. "With a view to assisting in solving manpower problems"—by which the directive would appear to have meant the supply of labour

[6] Hon E. G. Theodore. MLA Qld 1909-25; Premier and Treasurer 1919-25; MHR 1927-31; Treasurer 1929-30 and 1931; Director-General Allied Works 1942-44. Company director; b. Port Adelaide, SA, 29 Dec 1884. Died 9 Feb 1950.

[7] C. A. Hoy. Works Director for NSW 1935-38; Director-General of Works, Dept of Interior 1939-42; Asst Director-General Allied Works 1942-45, Dept of Works and Housing 1945-51. B. Sydney, 19 Aug 1888.

[8] Statutory Rules, No. 88, 26 Feb 1942.

[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 20, p. 6.

for Allied works rather than anything more comprehensive—the Minister for Labour and National Service would nominate a liaison officer from his department to work with the council.

The procedure originally laid down was that all proposals for Allied works would be submitted by the Administrative Planning Committee to the service Minister concerned and, upon approval, the Director-General would be informed by the Administrative Planning Committee that the work was required and would take over. With the lapsing of the Administrative Planning Committee other methods were evolved. Originally there had been in existence a sub-committee of the Administrative Planning Committee to recommend an order of priority in works. On 19th March the War Cabinet transformed this into a Priorities Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, it being recognised that military and strategical considerations really determined the urgency of defence undertakings.[1] In due course this sub-committee was enlarged to include representatives of the United States Army Services of Supply, the Department of Munitions, the Department of Supply and Shipping, the Allied Works Council and the Director-General of Manpower as well as representatives of the three Australian Chiefs of Staff. The procedure of requisitioning was then established as follows: a service or department submitted details of a proposal to the Works Priorities Sub-Committee, which met weekly. The sub-committee recommended a priority to the Chiefs of Staff Committee which determined whether the proposal should go on the priority list and what precedence it should have on that list. The Works Priorities Section of the Allied Works Council then issued a works priority certificate and forwarded it to the official of the council who would be responsible for seeing that the work was carried out.

The Allied Works Council obtained liaison with related branches of Commonwealth administration by having representatives of the Director-General of Manpower and the Director-General of War Organisation of Industry at its weekly meetings.

The first major difficulty faced by the council was the supply of labour. On 9th March the War Cabinet accepted a recommendation by Theodore for the creation of a Civil Constructional Corps in preference to a proposal for Army Construction Companies.[2] The decision of the War Cabinet was that the corps should be established both from volunteers and from persons called up under military impressment. The corps would be under the control and direction of the Director-General of Allied Works, provided that it might be brought under military control and discipline in an emergency. The employment of the corps was to be restricted to works undertaken by the Allied Works Council. Members would receive pay based

[1] War Cabinet Minute 2038, 19 Mar 1942; Agendum 163/1942.

[2] Earlier in February the War Cabinet had approved of a proposal put forward by the Commanding General of the United States Army Forces in Australia for the introduction of 25,000 coolies from the Netherlands East Indies to undertake defence works for the United States Army in Australia. Full responsibility would be accepted by the United States Army for the direction and control of this labour and for its return to the islands when the work was completed. A similar proposal was also approved in July 1943. In neither case, however, was any labour imported. (War Cabinet Minute 1839, 1 Feb, and 1843, 2 Feb 1942; War Cabinet Agendum 378/1943.)

on civilian award rates and, in fixing rates, regard would be paid to award conditions governing deductions for rations and other issues in kind and living-away allowances. The adoption of civilian rates of pay was approved on the understanding that no army entitlements, such as sick leave, dependants' allowances and repatriation benefits, would apply. Members of the labour corps should remain members of and continue to pay contributions to the trade unions to which they already belonged and any existing rights applicable to their present employment, such as the right to contribute to a provident fund, would be preserved on their transfer to the corps.[3] Theodore proceeded to prepare draft National Security Regulations to give effect to these decisions and the greater part of his proposals were approved by the War Cabinet on 9th April 1942.[4]

Over one proposal, that the Director-General be authorised as a person to consent to summary prosecutions for offences under the Allied Works Regulations, the War Cabinet hesitated. The offences set out in the regulations related to refusal to work; refusal to comply with lawful orders; counselling other members to do these things; and obstructing other members in the performance of their duties. In case of an offence the normal procedure would be to prosecute in a court of summary jurisdiction in accordance with Section 10 of the *National Security Act* which provided maximum penalties of a fine of £100 or six months' imprisonment or both.

On 11th April Theodore wrote to Curtin setting out his views as follows:

> Cessation of work over interpretation of industrial awards, or for no stated reason, failure to report for work, absence without leave and desertion from the job must all be regarded as serious offences and must be dealt with promptly and firmly. The only way these offences can be handled under the *National Security Act* is by summary prosecutions. This process must be put into operation speedily, if it is to be effective. After consultation with the representative of the Solicitor-General, it was considered that, in offences of the kind referred to above, the offender should be proceeded against immediately by the engineer-in-charge, or similar official, and the case heard without delay by the magistrate. This procedure could be operated quickly if I am authorised to consent to prosecutions. . . . If the Government is not favourable to granting the authority I seek for the real and active control of this labour, the only alternative I can submit is to arrange that all men called up for Allied works be subject to military attestment and remain under military discipline while they are employed on our works.

Eventually, after the War Cabinet had explored the alternative idea of drawing up a code for the Civil Constructional Corps providing the same penalties for desertion or absence without leave as in the army and had found themselves blocked by a limitation in Section 10 of the *National Security Act,* they accepted the view of Theodore that the penalties provided under the Act could only be made effective if speedy action were taken to obtain prosecutions for offences. On 27th April they approved that the Director-General be authorised "under Section 10 of the *National Security Act* as a person to consent to the summary prosecution of offences

[3] War Cabinet Minute 1955, 9 Mar 1942; War Cabinet Agendum 134/1942.
[4] War Cabinet Minute 2079, 9 Apr 1942. National Security (Allied Works) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 170, 14 Apr 1942.

by members of the Civil Constructional Corps under the Allied Works Regulations".[5]

Although the War Cabinet had given the Civil Constructional Corps the form of a civilian organisation and had refused to organise it as an Army Labour Corps, the discipline imposed and the powers given to the Director-General removed it into a class completely apart from normal industrial practice. The men were under compulsion, they could not refuse work, they were subject to regulations governing their conduct on the job, and in addition were subject to such orders as the Director-General might make for the maintenance of good order at works or in camps. One sentence from Curtin's public announcement of the War Cabinet's decision illustrates both the attempt to make it look like good trade union practice and the fact that it was not: "With a view to the speedy settlement of any doubts or disputes which may arise in relation to matters such as the proper interpretation of the terms and conditions of service, special industrial magistrates may be appointed, or jurisdiction may be conferred on State Industrial Magistrates, but members of the corps must not under any circumstances strike or refuse to obey orders."[6] The Minister might appoint the special industrial magistrates or authorise any industrial magistrate or any State officer to perform the powers and functions of special industrial magistrates; the terms and conditions of service were determined by the Director-General himself.[7]

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[5] War Cabinet Minutes 2100, 17 Apr, and 2118, 27 Apr 1942; War Cabinet Agendum 134/1942. Section 10 of the *National Security Act* read:

"10 (1) Any person who contravenes, or fails to comply with any provision of any regulation made in pursuance of this Act, or with any order, rule or by-law made in pursuance of any such regulation, shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.

(2) Any offence against this Act may be prosecuted either summarily or upon indictment, but an offender shall not be liable to be punished more than once in respect of the same offence.

(3) The punishment for an offence against this Act shall be—

(*a*) if the offence is prosecuted summarily—a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or both; or

(*b*) if the offence is prosecuted under indictment—a fine of any amount or imprisonment for any term, or both.

(4) An offence against this Act shall not be prosecuted summarily without the written consent of the Attorney-General, or the Minister, or a person thereto authorised in writing by the Attorney-General or the Minister, and an offence against this Act shall not be prosecuted upon indictment except in the name of the Attorney-General.

(5) For the purpose of the trial of a person summarily or upon indictment for an offence against this Act, the offence shall be deemed to have been committed either at the place in which it was actually committed or (subject to the Constitution) at any place in which the person may be.

(6) In addition to any other punishment, a court may, if it thinks fit, order the forfeiture of any money or goods in respect of which an offence against this Act has been committed."

An order authorising the Director-General "to consent to the summary prosecution of offences against the said Act by members of the Civil Constructional Corps established in pursuance of the National Security (Allied Works) Regulations" appeared in the *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 128 of 30th April 1942.

[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 25, p. 20.

[7] During the first year of operations of the Allied Works Council several prosecutions were taken, although, considering the number of men employed, serious trouble was infrequent. The chief examples reveal firstly that union officials worked among members of the corps and in nearly all cases except those of individual defaulters, any stoppages were the result of their intervention; secondly, in two of the most serious stoppages, the union officials were protected by the Government from the strict application of the Director-General's powers; thirdly, the council used its power as a means of keeping men at work rather than of penalising them.

Summonses were issued against a number of men who went on strike at Seymour, Victoria, in September 1942, but were withdrawn when the men undertook to return to work.

At Alice Springs, in October 1942, 37 truck drivers and labourers who had refused to work under a certain ganger were fined £20 each, in default 30 days' imprisonment.

In April 1943, when a number of men objected to shift work at the rate of pay fixed by a new award, the council served them with formal notices requiring them to work shifts. A union secretary directed the men to cease work. The Allied Works Council issued summonses against 81 men who refused to work and asked the Attorney-General's Department to summons the

While the organisation of the Civil Constructional Corps may be considered as one of the major departures from customary industrial practice which were made necessary by the urgency of war, in practice it brought a substantial number of industrial gains, and, while the coercive measures were often curbed in wartime by political decision and did not last beyond the end of the war, the gains in working conditions in many cases lasted after the war.

Up to June 1943 there was a gross enrolment in the corps of over 66,000 men, nearly half of them from New South Wales, and discharges totalling nearly 13,000 (about half for medical unfitness and less than 3,000 for unsuitability), leaving a strength of 53,500. About 34,000 of these were men over 35 years of age. The major occupational categories were labourers (22,000), carpenters (12,000) and truck drivers (3,300). Out of the total strength about 8,500 had volunteered, about 28,000 had been already working on Allied Works Council jobs when they were enrolled, and about 16,600 had been called up for service. They were distributed over all parts of Australia. Under National Security (Aliens Service) Regulations, notified on 3rd February 1942, certain classes of aliens could be required to perform such services as were determined by the Minister for Labour and National Service and with the creation of the Allied Works Council this pool of labour was made available to the Director-General. Some use was made of them on firewood cutting, charcoal burning and road works during 1942, and in May 1943 a Civil Aliens Corps was formed but yielded a limited supply of less than 4,000 men.[8]

The works undertaken by the Allied Works Council were of many kinds—docks, aerodromes, roads, gun emplacements, stores, barracks, fuel storage installations, hospitals, workshops, pipelines, wharves, mills and factories. Up to 30th June 1943 the expenditure on capital works totalled £55,961,000, the number of projects completed totalling 923 and those in hand 1,380. About one-third of the work had been done in Queensland and another one-third in New South Wales; £20,200,000 of the expenditure was on behalf of the United States; £21,000,000 was for the three Australian services, and £11,000,000 for the Department of Munitions.[9]

The second most pressing demand facing the Australian Government early in 1942 when it applied itself to problems of inter-Allied cooperation was to devise machinery for the allocation of supplies. At the outset matters coming within the purview of the Australian Department of Supply and Development were excepted from the operations of the Administrative

union secretary for counselling the men to commit a breach of the *National Security Act*. The charge against the secretary was first adjourned and then dropped by ministerial decision. Five of the men were fined £5 each and the other cases adjourned and eventually withdrawn by the council when they returned to work. During the currency of this dispute the secretaries of five trade unions inserted advertisements in the press calling on all their members enrolled in the Civil Constructional Corps to stop work and attend a meeting during working hours. About 4,000 workers would have been affected if the order had been obeyed and the Director-General instructed that the secretaries be arrested for a breach of the *National Security Act*. Two arrests were made but the prosecution was not proceeded with, on ministerial decision.

[8] See "The Wartime Treatment of Aliens", Appendix 4 to *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*.

[9] See *War Economy, 1942-1945*, and D. P. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry*.

Planning Committee. Faced with the intention of the United States Navy, Army and Lend-Lease Administration each to set up its own organisation in Australia, the War Cabinet decided on 27th January to ask the United States Government to designate a single supply representative in Australia and to establish a small Allied Supply Council composed of the Secretary of the Department of Supply and Development, the Director of the Division of Import Procurement (the Australian authority which handled Lend-Lease supplies for Australia) and an American supply representative. It was proposed that a ministerial committee should also be created.[1] After functioning rather loosely for several weeks and undergoing a searching re-examination in an inter-departmental committee, this organisation was expanded and modified. These modifications were necessary both because the original organisation had excluded some of the interested authorities, and because a new situation and an enormous increase in demand had been brought about by the changing fortunes of war and the creation of the South-West Pacific Command. Eventually two bodies were created. The Allied Supply Council was composed of the Australian Ministers for Supply, Munitions, Trade and Customs, and War Organisation of Industry, with a representative of the United States Government and the chairman of the Allied Supply Standing Committee. The Allied Supply Standing Committee was composed of the chairman, executive officers of the Commonwealth Departments of Aircraft Production, Customs, Munitions, Supply and War Organisation of Industry, representatives of the Commander-in-Chief and its own executive officer.

The council, with the committee as its executive, was designed to be primarily a coordinating, planning and advisory body. It would normally recommend action to existing agencies but could also make recommendations to the Prime Minister, who was both Minister for Defence and the link between the Australian Government and MacArthur, in order to bring about such action. The American representatives, of course, had direct access to their own headquarters.

> The purpose of the Council (states the report adopted by the War Cabinet) is that it should serve as a focal point and a clearing house in matters pertaining to the present and potential availability of supplies of all sorts from Australian sources. Its methods and channels of operation should be simple and direct, functioning through existing agencies and reporting directly to the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief.
>
> The United States Government has delegated to the Commander-in-Chief final decision for allocation of supplies from the United States. The Council will be the medium in Australia through which the Australian Government will approach the Commander-in-Chief in respect of the priority to be allotted for supplies from the United States.

The functions of the council were to coordinate information with respect to Australian productive capacity, study the statements of needs of the military forces and the possible ways in which they could be met, ascertain the minimum essential requirements for the civilian population and for the

[1] War Cabinet Minute 1778, 27 Jan 1942; Agendum 60/1942. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 16, p. 23.

maintenance of civilian production, confer with appropriate authorities regarding modification in production or supply or demand and render advice or recommendations accordingly. The War Cabinet gave its approval on 5th May.[2]

On the same day the Prime Minister announced the constitution of a Services Munitions Coordinating Committee, consisting of the Director-General and Assistant Director-General of Munitions and the Principal Supply Officers of the three services. The functions of this committee, which was the inheritor of a similar committee set up in September 1940 by the Menzies Government, was "to appraise the requirements of the forces in Australia and Australia's capacity to meet such requirements; to revise the munitions programmes where considered necessary so as to maintain a balance in general production; to approve of the conversion into munitions orders of the requirements which had been forecast; to determine the necessity and advisability of the introduction of major modifications affecting manufacture; to review the production implications of new or altered specifications of munitions requirements and to determine priority of programmes where necessary".[3]

The War Cabinet also reached the conclusion that the whole of the munitions capacity of Australia was required to help in arming the forces in Australia and that, excepting New Zealand, Australia was no longer in a position to supply munitions to other countries. The Eastern Group Supply Council, the authority set up by the British Commonwealth to coordinate supplies and demands of forces in the Eastern Group, and permanently in session at New Delhi, was so informed. An instruction was given that if Australian production capacity of any item of munitions was in excess of the requirements of the forces located in Australia, the surplus capacity should not be used to produce for export but should be diverted to other items which were in short supply in Australia.[4]

Following proposals by the London Munitions Assignment Board for pooling of Australian production of army weapons and ammunition an Assignments Committee was set up consisting of two representatives from each of the services (one to represent the Chief of Staff and the other to represent Supply); a representative from the United Kingdom, one from the United States, and two representatives from the Department of Munitions. A representative of the Chief of the General Staff was to be chairman. The committee received and considered claims for Australian production and made its recommendations to the Defence Committee. These arrangements superseded earlier proposals that Australian production of small arms ammunition should be pooled and allocated by the London Small Arms Ammunition Sub-Committee.[5]

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[2] War Cabinet Minute 2131, 5 May 1942; Agendum 60/1942, Supplement No. 2. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 28, pp. 8-10.
Accounts of administrative machinery from the American view appear in *Engineers of the Southwest Pacific 1941-1945*, Vol VI (1951) and Vol VII (1949).

[3] War Cabinet Minute 2086A, 9 Apr 1942; Agendum 189/1942. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 28, p. 10.

[4] War Cabinet Minute 2112, 27 Apr 1942; Agendum 215/1942.

[5] War Cabinet Minute 2400, 21 Sep 1942; Agendum 386/1942.

In setting up the Australian Assignments Committee the War Cabinet stipulated that it should be made clear to the United Kingdom Government that, while the Commonwealth Government agreed to the proposal that the Australian production of army weapons and ammunition should be pooled and to the establishment of machinery for its assignment, it reserved to itself the control and direction of Australian production policy.

Alongside measures taken to organise more effectively the Australian production of the materials of war, the new war situation was accompanied by changes in procurement of supplies from overseas. At the end of December 1941 it had been decided to bring all acquiring authorities in the United States into a single organisation, Australian War Supplies Procurement, with headquarters in Washington. Its counterpart in Australia was the Division of Import Procurement with headquarters in Sydney. Both were responsible to the Minister for Trade and Customs.

The mounting demands by Australia from the United States were henceforward met mainly through the extension of the American Lend-Lease system. On 23rd February 1942 the United States and United Kingdom had concluded a Mutual Aid Agreement, providing for a continuation of Lend-Lease aid from the United States to the United Kingdom and, indirectly, to the Dominions, which received their supplies as part of the United Kingdom allocation. The agreement established the general principle of reciprocal aid to the United States by the United Kingdom and pledged the parties to work for better post-war world conditions by agreed action to expand production and consumption, to limit trade preferences and to reduce tariffs and other trade barriers.

Subsequently, after United States forces had arrived in Australia in greater numbers and the question of financing supplies and services provided for them by Australia had arisen, negotiations were opened and culminated in the presentation by the United States to Australia of the draft for an exchange of notes by which Australia would explicity accept the principles contained in the Anglo-American Mutual Aid Agreement as governing the provision of mutual aid between Australia and the United States. The general principle to be followed in providing such aid was that the war production and the war resources of both nations should be used by the armed forces of each in the way which would most efficiently utilise available materials, manpower, production facilities and shipping space. So far as possible, decisions as to the most effective use of resources should be made in common, pursuant to the common plan for winning the war. As large a portion as possible of the articles and services which each Government might authorise to be provided to the other should be in the form of reciprocal aid so that the need of each Government for the currency of the other might be reduced to a minimum. Australia would receive its share of American war production to the extent authorised under the United States *Lend-Lease Act* of 11th March 1941, and Australia would provide as reciprocal aid such types of assistance for the armed forces of the United States in Australian territories or elsewhere

as might be agreed, as military equipment, ammunition, military and naval stores, facilities and services for the forces, and supplies, materials and services needed in the construction of military projects and capital works.

The negotiations were carried out both in Washington, between Dr Evatt and the United States Lend-Lease authorities, and in Australia between the American Minister and the Australian Prime Minister and Treasurer; and after careful inter-departmental discussion of all aspects the terms of the proposed agreement were approved by the War Cabinet, on the recommendation of Mr J. B. Chifley, on 31st August 1942.[6] The decision was put into effect with the exchange of notes in Washington on 3rd September.

The details of the Lend-Lease and reciprocal aid system as it operated in Australia and the effects it had on the economic side of the war effort are examined in other volumes of this series. The negotiation and conclusion of the agreement also had some political significance. The approval given by the War Cabinet on 31st August to the proposed exchange of notes represented another step in the development of independent Australian status as an ally and as a partner with special responsibilities and opportunities in the Pacific theatre. It also proved a turning-point in the Australian war effort. We have seen how, from the commencement of the war, Australian governments had been beset by the problem of deciding what was to be the nature of the Australian war effort. Now, although perhaps not immediately conscious of the fact, they started on a series of decisions which, when coupled with the claims for more and more American forces in the South-West Pacific Area, inevitably led to a change in the nature of the Australian contribution. Henceforth more and more of the demands on Australia were demands for production, food, materials, labour, services and facilities. When Australia had called for reinforcements she had used the argument that Australia was the base from which the counter-offensive of the United Nations must be launched. She had now laid on herself the duties of the base. Under the agreement between Australia and the United States reciprocal aid was limited to the needs of United States forces in Australia and its territories "and in such other cases as may be determined by common agreement in the light of the development of the war". At first Australia responded freely to requests for supplies to United States forces outside Australian territory, such as in the Solomon Islands and in New Caledonia, but towards the end of 1942 an order for £15,000,000 of food supplies for United States forces outside the South-West Pacific Area made the Australian authorities pause.[7] At first their hesitation appears to have been solely on the question of where the financial responsibility of the Australian Treasury would begin and end, but in the course of the opening months of 1943 the ultimate meaning of such requests as a claim on Australian resources was seen more clearly and Australia was soon brought face to face with the

[6] War Cabinet Minute 2339, 31 Aug, Agendum 364/1942; Parliamentary Paper, No. 95, 1940-43, documents relating to Lend-Lease and Reciprocal Lend-Lease arrangements; *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 40, pp. 3-8.

[7] War Cabinet Agendum 494/1942, 5 Dec; War Cabinet Minute 2507, 7 Dec 1942.

question whether her main war effort was to be that of a fighter or a supplier of provisions to fighters.

Another political aspect of the Mutual Aid Agreement centred on the provisions in Article VII regarding the post-war order. This had been one of the first questions to catch the eye of the Australian departmental experts when, at the end of 1941, they had watched the course of negotiation between the United Kingdom and the United States. Article VII provided for agreed action by the United States of America and the United Kingdom, open to participation by all countries of like mind, directed to the expansion, by appropriate international and domestic measures, of production, employment and the exchange and consumption of goods and to the "elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment in international commerce, and to the reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers". The acceptance of this, according to the Australian inter-departmental committee which studied the draft, "would involve being prepared to modify imperial preference, with possibly adverse effects on certain export industries and would limit our freedom to impose prohibitively high tariffs". The desire to see the conclusion of an Anglo-American Mutual Aid Agreement and to meet American wishes was strong. Some advantage to Australia in freeing restraints on trade could also be seen. Already, by the United Nations Declaration, Australia had declared her adherence to the principle of full collaboration between all nations in the economic field and of access on equal terms to the trade and raw materials of the world. In any case, did Article VII mean anything more than an undertaking to try to reach an agreement on these matters? So the domestic arguments ran.

The War Cabinet on 10th February agreed to express to the United Kingdom its view that Article VII must not stand in the way of an agreement but that first an attempt should be made to modify the draft so that it would speak of the "progressive" elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment instead of bluntly saying that they should be eliminated.[8] In the event, however, no modification was made in the standard form of Article VII and the exchange of notes by which the Australian Government applied to itself the principles of the Anglo-American Mutual Aid Agreement made no reference to it. War Cabinet papers reveal some apprehension about how interested sections of the public would take the Australian acceptance of Article VII but for the most part the public never noticed that it had been accepted.[9]

The total recorded reciprocal Lend-Lease expenditure by Australia up to 31st December 1942 was £27,545,000, and the estimated expenditure for the remaining six months of the financial year was £33,500,000—

[8] War Cabinet minute of 10 Feb 1942; Agendum 88/1942.

[9] The present writer, who was associated officially with the work of the inter-departmental committee and the drafting of the speech on international affairs in which the Anglo-American Agreement was announced to Parliament on 25th February 1942, remembers with what anxious care the words of the statement were chosen and scrutinised by Ministers and officials who were directly concerned. After all the care, scarcely a newspaper saw the significance of that part of the speech, and in the debate in the House not a single member referred to it. See *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 54-6. For the discussion of the relationship between Article VII of the Mutual Aid Agreement and post-war reconstruction planning and policy see Chapter 8 of the present volume.

two figures which give a rough indication of the size of the commitment which Australia had in view shortly after accepting the agreement.

A further administrative innovation was the creation of the Australian Food Council. The first move was made by the creation, in March 1942, of a Directorate of Defence Foodstuffs within the Department of Supply to control production and supply of all foodstuffs to Australian and Allied forces, the export of foodstuffs to Allied and Empire units overseas and to cooperate with the Department of Commerce and State Governments to maintain essential civilian food supplies.[1] This was succeeded in April by a more widely based Food Council, headed by the Ministers for Supply and Commerce (the Federal department charged with production of foodstuffs) and representatives of both these departments, the Prices Commission, the Department of War Organisation of Industry and the Australian and Allied services. The Controller of Defence Foodstuffs was to deal with all matters in regard to service requirements and a special section of the Department of Commerce would handle civil needs. At its first meeting on 12th May the council proposed "a planned food economy" and subsequently put its proposals into effect by establishing food production quotas and, on that basis, making allocations among Australian civilians, the fighting services and the export market. Later it embarked on plans for the increased preserving and processing of foods.[2]

The Food Council was advisory. In April 1943 there was established alongside it a Food Executive "charged with the production, control and distribution of foodstuffs at the highest pitch of efficiency, not only to meet all existing demands, but to face the increasing demands which the war will inevitably produce". It was proposed that it should work in close cooperation with the London Food Committee and the Combined Food Board in Washington and with the New Zealand Government, with whom Australia shared a major responsibility as a supplier of food to the Pacific area. The members of the Food Executive, which was compared by Curtin with Production Executive, were the Ministers for Supply (Chairman), Commerce, and War Organisation of Industry, and the Treasurer, and their executive officers were the Director-General of Agriculture, who had been newly appointed to the Department of Commerce, and the Controller of Defence Foodstuffs.[3]

The preceding account of administrative innovation during 1942 has been given to illustrate, by means of the machinery that was created for the purpose, the multiplication of the tasks of wartime government as the result of the outbreak of war in the Pacific and Australia's assumption of new responsibility as the ally of the United States of America, while at the same time showing the way in which the Australian Government attempted

[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 21, pp. 16-17.

[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 26, pp. 23-4; No. 28, p. 22; No. 34, pp. 7-8; No. 35, pp. 22-3.

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 57, p. 23. From 22nd December 1942 the Department of Commerce was changed to Department of Commerce and Agriculture.

to solve the problems of participation in the high strategy of supply, production and procurement and of inter-Allied cooperation in the new situation which had been so suddenly created. The four or five top men of Curtin's team and the senior officials close to them worked with prodigious energy and close concentration in the wholly novel circumstances of a fear of invasion, a great diversion of manpower into the fighting services and war production, and the coming of an ally whose notion of high-pressure efficiency often seemed to be to push over something before asking what it was. There is further justification for describing the administrative machinery first, for, in truth, the machinery was at first more noticeable than what it accomplished. The Government was "tooling up" for the anticipated tasks. In the meantime the young men were being drafted into the forces in thousands; piece by piece the new machines began to accelerate each on its own job; more and more Americans were arriving; more and more demands were being made and accepted.

Under that impelling fear of invasion, Curtin, while pressing his claims for Allied aid, worked and preached to make sure that Australia also gave its utmost.

The "Economic Plan" and "Total Mobilisation" announced in February had in effect placed the whole productive system of the nation under the control and direction of the Government and suspended the normal incentives or the normal opportunities for individual decision. The Government assumed the responsibility of telling the people—the workman and the owner, the producer and the consumer, the buyer and the seller, the fighting man and the technician—what it wanted them to do, and, in addition, of undertaking the organisation of the nation's rural, industrial and military activities, so that what they were asked to do could be done promptly and efficiently.

This responsibility, in all except military matters, devolved upon the Production Executive of Cabinet. The committee of nine Ministers, with the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, Mr Dedman, as its chairman and the Department of War Organisation of Industry as its secretariat, applied the Economic Plan. A glance at their agenda shows that nothing was too big or too small for their attention. They were concerned with seeing that there was salt in the housewife's shaker and that the whole war economy was adjusted to changing situations. Perhaps at times the "salt-shaker" side of their work received rather more notice both by them and by the public than the bigger problems of the economic war effort, but the industry of the members of Production Executive in both fields was prodigious. While the War Cabinet and, beyond it, the Full Cabinet retained authority on major policy, Production Executive, in handling practical questions, made decisions which had the determinative effects of a declaration of policy. Their departments put in train the measures by which these decisions were applied and, from the daily delights of administration, became fecund with suggestions for more controls. Never had Ministers or public servants had such opportunities. Exerting authority had



"Did you get the plans and specifications approved by W.O.I.?"

G. K. Townshend in Bulletin *(Sydney) 10 Jan 1945*

become a patriotic duty and those citizens who got in the way could be stigmatised for not cooperating in the war effort.

There was a real danger that administration would do more than was necessary and that it would lose sight of the overall objective in the pursuit of its several tasks. The chief safeguard against that danger and the means by which the economic side of the war effort could be kept in touch with higher policy lay in the fact that some of the members of Production Executive were also members of the War Cabinet. In particular, the chairman, Mr Dedman, who on his own application was made a member of the War Cabinet on 11th December 1941, the Treasurer, Mr Chifley, and the Minister for Supply, Mr Beasley, carried over into the War Cabinet the knowledge and the opinions they had acquired in their detailed work on Production Executive, and also ensured that Production Executive worked with a close familiarity with the higher policy relating to the conduct of the war.

At this point, too, the quiet and obdurate strength and sound sense of Chifley began to make themselves felt as a major influence in the conduct of the war. Treasurers are always in a strong position in a Cabinet; under Chifley the Treasury became, chiefly by reason of the qualities of its Minister, one of the creative forces in the Australian war effort.

It would probably have been wise if there had been more definite arrangements for liaison between the War Cabinet and Production Executive at the departmental level, for, although the departments represented on the War Cabinet became aware of matters before the War Cabinet and although the Department of War Organisation of Industry gained membership of most of the important inter-departmental committees, there was a tendency for the "economic" departments to go ahead in disregard of considerations of higher defence policy and for the "war" departments to regard the details of economic administration as subordinate matters. As was previously remarked the synthesis was eventually reached through the exigencies of manpower allocation and through the Treasury.

The full activities of Production Executive will be told elsewhere.[4] In a review of its operations, presented to the Full Cabinet in December 1942,[5] Production Executive reported that from 400,000 to 500,000 persons had been diverted from normal civilian life to war jobs in the services, factories and elsewhere; non-essential uses of resources had been rigidly reduced; there had been a great expansion of supplies and equipment for the services. Its measures for the maintenance and distribution of supplies included the introduction of coupon rationing schemes and other controls over essential commodities, the establishment of food production goals, and action to increase the production of textiles in Australia. Measures for the rationalisation of industry had been carried out to save manpower, materials and equipment by more efficient organisation or by "simplification" of the product (a term which meant anything from standard designs for an article to using less paper in wrapping it up). Non-

[4] See *War Economy 1942-1945.*

[5] Full Cabinet Minute 394, 14 Dec 1942. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 49, pp. 8-11.

essential production had been prohibited and the use of materials restricted. It had also undertaken measures for the promotion of industrial welfare to improve the health and efficiency of workers.

The review thus covered mainly the way in which the progress of the war effort had been made possible both by the large-scale diversion of manpower and by the prohibitions, restrictions and rationalisation measures which had been used to cut down waste of effort and waste of resources. It also revealed the care taken to prevent shortages of essentials and to ensure the proper distribution of available supplies. Production Executive reached the conclusion that none of these measures could be relaxed. The Government must decide either to go ahead diverting labour and other resources to the war effort, or to jettison some sections of its approved programme because the nation was no longer prepared to provide the necessary manpower and materials. By its endorsement of the review and by a public announcement the Government made it clear that it would go ahead.

The presenting of the issue in this form was due to the fact that the work of the Minister for War Organisation of Industry had been surrounded with a certain amount of public controversy and even some objection from within his own party. None of the criticism was fundamental. It referred mostly to decisions which had caused sectional or personal inconvenience or affected sectional or personal interests. Some of these matters will be looked at below, not as significant criticisms of the administration, but as indications of the way in which the life of the people was being affected by war. It would be just to remark here, however, that this controversy was heightened by that lack of humour and dullness of human feeling which seem to become the occupational disease —if it were not part of the original qualification—of those who are most successful in the tasks of regimentation. In such tasks men become "manpower", a man's life-work becomes "production capacity", a man's pleasures become "civilian amenities" or "non-essential products" and a woman, without distinction between the shrew and the goddess, is "female labour". In document after document written by the Department of War Organisation of Industry for submission to Production Executive one has a feeling that the population of Australia has been transformed from people into ciphers. One sentence commences warmly: "The activities of the Department affect very closely the daily life of the people of Australia and"—the consequential duty being thrown not on the organisation but on those whom it serves—"the success of its operations depends to a very large extent on the degree of cooperation forthcoming from employers and employees throughout industry and commerce".

Perhaps there might have been less controversy if there had been signs of more confidence in the response of the people, and their own interest in helping to win the war. Perhaps the response would have come more readily if the chairman of Production Executive, commendable for his energy, political courage and determination, had sometimes managed to hide from the public a personal zeal which made it appear that he liked

doing things which made comfortable people less comfortable, and if his department had studied public relations as well as economics. The scolding note so often associated with the announcement of restrictions even crept into Curtin's statement reviewing the first year's work of his colleagues:

> Those who refuse to accept with a good grace the necessary sacrifices of war are not true citizens of the Commonwealth; and I am convinced that there is no greater enemy in our midst than persons who try to spread the insidious doctrine that the necessity for sacrifice has passed, or who conceal their advocacy of this view among a welter of misrepresentation of the particular measures by which the sacrifices are enforced.

Once the Economic Plan had been accepted as necessary for winning the war, however, no more substantial criticism falls on Production Executive for the way it carried out that plan. It applied controls and assisted to bring about "total mobilisation" with thoroughness and dispatch. Its executive department, War Organisation of Industry, showed no worse faults than any other department, and was handicapped more than most by the fact that the field in which it was working was completely unfamiliar to the Australian public and the Australian administrative services. Its attempts at coordination were impeded even more than was usual by inter-departmental rivalries and conflicting ambitions. The main criticism which might be made against both Production Executive and the department was one that applies to nearly all sections of the administration at that period of the war. In the concentration on the urgent and practical tasks imposed on them by the changing war situation they were tardy in considering the war effort as a whole.

In addition to those inter-Allied and inter-departmental councils to which reference has already been made, the Australian Clothing Council and the Emergency Transport Priorities Committee were established by Production Executive, with the Department of War Organisation of Industry as the executive.

During the whole of 1942, while the machinery for the better organisation of production and supply outlined above was being brought into operation, the constant and overriding concern had been manpower. Within a fortnight of the Japanese attack Production Executive had recommended a Manpower Directorate, under the Minister for Labour and National Service,[6] and after consideration by the Full Cabinet and the War Cabinet its formation was announced on 21st January 1942.[7] In the course of the year a Manpower Sub-Committee of the War Cabinet, a Departmental Manpower Sub-Committee and a War Commitments Committee were created. Because of their overriding importance in determining the conduct of the Australian war effort, the subjects which

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[6] Production Executive Agendum 10/1941, 13 Dec 1941, considered by the War Cabinet as Agendum 446/1941; Minute 1646, 31 Dec 1941. The War Cabinet sent it to the Full Cabinet because "other Ministers were interested in the proposals", and the draft regulations were considered and approved by the War Cabinet as Agendum 446/1941, Supplement 1; Minute 1695, 19 Jan 1942.

[7] National Security (Manpower) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 34, 31 Jan 1942, established the office of Director-General of Manpower, the National Service Offices and the principle of "protected undertakings".

came before these bodies will be considered separately in their relation to the determination of higher policy.[8]

3—INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS AND THE FIGHT FOR COAL

The total war effort presented the Government with a number of new problems of industrial relations or complicated some of those which had been constantly before Australian administrations. It would be beyond the scope of the present volume to give detailed and specialised attention to a number of questions relating to the operation of the whole system for wage-fixing and determination of industrial conditions and those exceptional problems, such as dilution of labour, which were introduced. Nor will it be possible to enter into the vast range of questions which remained the domestic concern of the trade union movement, such as the organisation of new groups of workers or the disputes over the jurisdiction of rival unions. The economic questions, such as those relating to the cost of living and the pegging of wages, or the administrative difficulties encountered in the course of carrying out manpower policy, also require separate treatment. All these matters will be left on one side, except insofar as any of them may become the subject of political controversy from time to time.

The main questions with which we are concerned are the arrangements made by the Government for the better handling of labour questions; their attempts to bring the trade union movement more closely into association with the war effort; and the attempts to avert industrial stoppages and, in particular, their battle to maintain production of coal.

The handling of labour questions was confided chiefly to the Department of Labour and National Service. The department had developed, as did other parts of the administrative machinery, in response to the demands made upon it. In 1940, when it was formed, industrial problems in the shape of increased powers for the Arbitration Court,[9] and the need to train greater numbers of tradesmen and technicians and to administer the dilution agreements with various unions,[1] had produced the two earliest divisions—Industrial Relations and Technical (later Industrial) Training. The department was also associated with the Coal Reference Boards.

After Japan entered the war the first of these two divisions was charged with administration of Part V of the Economic Organisation Regulations which dealt with industrial relations, and of which the most difficult problem was wage-pegging. The Women's Employment Board was also associated with this division.

In 1941 when manpower problems were becoming more acute emphasis moved to conditions of work and an Industrial Welfare Division was formed (a director had been appointed in mid-1941). At first activities were restricted to Government factories and ventures but later the division

[8] The main treatment of manpower policy is given in the Economic volumes of this series.
[9] National Security (Industrial Peace) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 290, 17 Dec 1940.
[1] By the end of the war 120,000 tradesmen and technicians had been trained under the department's scheme. See also *The Government and the People, 1939-1941.*

interested itself in private factories. Liaison with State departments—for the States regarded industrial relations as their province—was essential. The division directed its efforts towards better canteen services (ultimately 45,000 workers were served through 125 cafeterias conducted by the Food Services Branch); towards better construction and planning of factories; and to the welfare of employees. To promote the last a number of welfare officers were trained—first for Government, later for private factories. Standards of lighting received considerable attention.[2]

As part of its welfare work the department became interested in housing and ultimately administered the Housing of War Workers Regulations[3] and the Commonwealth War Workers Housing Trust.[4]

Of two other early divisions of the department, one, the Employment Division, did not survive the establishment of the Manpower Directorate;[5] the other, the Reconstruction Division, was to form the basis of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction.

Besides the Department of Labour and National Service, however, there were other authorities concerned with manpower and later the Minister was to make a complaint, with some substance to it, that one authority after another had been set up outside his department to deal with labour problems—the Maritime Industry Commission and the Stevedoring Industry Commission under the Minister for Supply; the Manpower Directorate, nominally under the Minister for Labour, but exercising considerable independence; the Coal Commission, under the Minister for Supply; the Allied Works Council and Civil Constructional Corps under the Minister for the Interior; the Arbitration Court machinery under the Attorney-General; and the related activities of the Minister for War Organisation of Industry.[6]

In handling industrial questions the Curtin Government had the advantage of being a Labour Government. A leading article in the *Australian Worker,* speaking of the manpower regulations, expressed a truth which applied to many other governmental acts:

> To be perfectly frank, the unions would not have accepted the regulations from any other than a Labour Government. . . . But John Curtin is a different proposition altogether. The unions of Australia have implicit trust in the Labour Prime Minister and are prepared to grant him and his Cabinet colleagues power which, in the most vital sense, are incompatible with Labour principles, and can only derive any justification at all from the overwhelming necessities of a nation in grave peril.[7]

Curtin had, in addition to that trust, several other practical advantages which no one but a Labour Prime Minister could have enjoyed. He could and did talk to trade unionists as a delegate to their own conferences in

[2] National Security (Industrial Lighting) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 302, 8 Jul 1942.

[3] Statutory Rules, No. 169, 21 Jul 1941.

[4] National Security (Housing of War Workers) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 207, 26 Aug 1941.

[5] Although later the Commonwealth Employment Service (a feature of post-war reconstruction) became a section of the department. Maintenance of the National Register which had been the work of the Record and Analysis Division also ceased after the registration of civilians was introduced, and this division also disappeared.
The staff of the department had risen from 111 in June 1941 to 851 by June 1943.

[6] Full Cabinet Agendum 473, 2 Apr 1943.

[7] *Australian Worker* (Sydney), 11 Feb 1942.

plain and forthright terms. He could and did use the whole machinery of the Labour movement both to communicate his purpose and to muster support. In the final issue he could and did make it plain that the value of political action to industrial Labour was for the time being wholly dependent on the success and the continuation in office of the Curtin Government.

Recognising these great advantages of a Labour Prime Minister, however, the fact remains that Curtin had continuous industrial trouble and had his own peculiar problems in meeting the pressure from the trade union movement. Just as he could speak plainly to them so they could and did speak plainly to him.

The working man felt his strength. He was now wanted where previously he felt he was regarded as dispensable. Various sections of the trade union movement thought the time was opportune to carry into effect some of their own ideas. Thus the annual convention of the Australian Workers' Union in February 1942 made representations to the Government that all war industry be nationalised. The Labour Women's Organising Committee in March demanded equal pay for equal work in favour of women, and a Council of Action for Equal Pay campaigned to that end. Periodically there were demands for wage increases against the provision in the National Economic Plan to peg wages, and the Australasian Council of Trade Unions made representations to the Government in September and October to give immediate attention to an increase in the basic wage. From various quarters came the request that compulsory unionism be enforced either in the case of particular groups of workers or as a general rule. Employment in the Civil Constructional Corps and the Civil Aliens Corps and the use of the labour of prisoners of war were all subject to close scrutiny by and protracted consultation with trade union representatives. These were only some examples of the matters on which the trade unions were constantly alert. Looked at from their point of view they were maintaining the principles and the practices to which the Government was pledged and, moreover, in so doing were helping to ensure that the Government continued to have the trust and cooperation of a large body of industrial workers. Looked at from another point of view their demands were sometimes so detailed and exacting as to cost the members of the Government considerable time and patience in putting into effect their plans for the war effort. The tasks were unnecessarily complicated, too, because that continuous struggle for position and influence and for the grouping of power which goes on inside all political parties was, in the Labour Party, necessarily related to the favour or the disfavour of the unions, and there were, in Curtin's own Cabinet, Ministers who played their own individual game to maintain or to improve their own particular piece of territory or section of opinion inside the movement.

Luckily the entry of the Soviet Union into the war had brought the extreme Left to see the "imperialistic war" as a "holy war". Their pamphlets and their papers and their speeches were now all in favour of higher production. "The Labour Government must be firmly supported

by the workers. Work harder, more consistently and avoid strikes altogether should be their motto."[8] Their quarrel with the employers now was not that the capitalists were trying to seduce the workers into waging their capitalistic war but that they were doing all they could to spoil the war effort of a determined proletariat. The old Labour cleavage on the subject remained.[9] On 13th May 1943, a date uncomfortably close to election time, the New South Wales Labour Council by the narrow vote of 110 votes to 98 declared itself in favour of "united action by all political parties of the working class", and supported proposals put forward by a conference between the Communist Party and the New South Wales State Labour Party (Hughes-Evans group) for a "united front" against fascism. This brought a prompt rejoinder from the president of the Federal Executive of the Australian Labour Party: "The New South Wales Labour Council has no authority of any kind to express any opinion as to political Labour policy. . . . The Federal A.L.P. is definitely opposed to any collaboration with Communists or any other enemies of the Labour Party." The struggle between Left and Centre continued with varying fortunes but, in general, the moderates had gained in strength and influence, partly because the nature of wartime employment had tended to strengthen the membership of some of the moderate unions, partly because the patriotic claims of the war effort to which the majority of workers responded were more simply and honestly expressed by them, and partly because the support of Curtin meant support for moderation.

The boldness and resolution of Curtin as a war leader shone perhaps more brightly when he was among his own people. Those most closely associated with him, either as associates or as officials, agree that the most forceful speeches he ever made during the war—most of them unrecorded—were made at Labour conferences. There he was decisive, determined and eloquent, speaking extempore in the surroundings in which his political life had been nurtured and in a style in which he was at home.

The Labour Government made deliberate efforts to associate the Labour movement more closely with the conduct of the war. Attempts to form a Trade Union Advisory Panel "for general consultation on industrial matters connected with the war" were no more successful than those of their predecessor because of the impossibility of the unions' agreeing on representation on such a panel.[1] Later the Government proposed to set up joint Production Consultative and Advisory Committees in Commonwealth aircraft and munition factories "to provide a regular exchange of views between the management and workers on matters relating to the improvement of production, to increase efficiency and to make recommendations on both matters".[2] They were not to deal with matters covered by agreement with trade unions or normally dealt with through the shop

[8] Jack Lindsay, *The Battle for Production, Factory Front, Women in the Workshops.* Pamphlets published by the Labour Council of New South Wales. Lindsay is a barrister, originally from Western Australia, and in Australia throughout the war; not to be confused with the novelist of the same name.

[9] See *The Government and the People, 1939-1941.*

[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 5, p. 9; No. 37, p. 12; No. 52, p. 13.

[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 44, p. 45; No. 48, p. 20.

stewards of unions, but their formation was linked with the improvement of industrial relations for it was urged in some quarters that the association of the worker with management would lessen discontent. Trade union liaison officers were appointed to the Department of War Organisation of Industry and to the Department of Labour and National Service, and trade union representatives were added as advisers to the industry advisory committees of the Manpower Directorate and to the Prices Commission. These arrangements encouraged cooperation by giving labour a keener consciousness that it was helping to run the war, even if the arrangements were not carried as far and as successfully as their sponsors had hoped, and, when added to the much greater effect which the nation's extremity had on all Australians, facilitated the revolutionary changes which that emergency brought. Certainly the Labour Government was succeeding where its predecessor had met obstacles. On the other hand under the administration of Mr Ward, who used to speak publicly of employers in terms usually kept for criminals, the employers sometimes found cause to complain.

Nevertheless, in spite of the exceptional efforts made by the Government and the advantages it enjoyed and in spite of the full support of the moderate union leaders and the exhortations to greater production from the Left Wing, industrial stoppages still occurred. According to figures published by the Government in July 1943, the weekly average of time lost by strikes during its eighteen months of office was 10,610 working days compared with 17,340 days when Menzies was Prime Minister and 64,535 days during Fadden's brief term. This improvement was secured by means of regulations far more stringent than would have been thought possible in the early years of the war.

The strikes occurred in all parts of Australia and among many groups of workers. Most of them were local disputes over local grievances and were quickly settled. A number of them were started by workers in disregard and in some cases in defiance of their union executives. The only industry in which striking was continuous and extensive was coal-mining in New South Wales.

As previously recounted, early in February the Central Council of the Miners' Federation laid down a 12-point programme under which miners pledged themselves to produce sufficient coal for a maximum war effort, to use the machinery of peaceful settlement, and to avoid stoppages, taking disciplinary action against members where necessary. The Federation also asked that the Government exercise stricter supervision over the industry, give wider powers to the Coal Commission for planning production, distribution and transport, allow direct representation of the mineworkers in all departments of the Commission's work, and withdraw the National Security Regulations providing penalties for absence from work. During March and April there were further stoppages. The Government took stronger action. The War Cabinet discussed the current disputes on 31st March and decided to inform the Federation that the work had to be performed

either by civilians or by men called up for the Allied Works Council under military discipline with civilian rates of pay and conditions. If the miners did not resume work under either of these two headings they would be called up under the *Defence Act* and transferred either to military service or to other works under the Allied Works Council.[3] Stoppages recurred. On 9th April the War Cabinet, examining the situation, came to the conclusion that the National Security (Mobilisation of Services and Property) Regulations were inadequate to deal effectively with the coal-miners and, on their instructions, new regulations were drawn up.[4] The Prime Minister was in a determined mood. Speaking at the Melbourne Trades Hall that night he said:

> I am not going to allow the activities or desires of my Government to be stultified by a band of insurgent malcontents. I do not intend to apologise to anybody for having used National Security Regulations against the coal-miners. I did not do so until I was informed by the Coal-miners' Union that the men had stopped work without the approval of the Union. . . . It is not the genuine miner with whom the Government is dealing because genuine miners would resort to conciliation and arbitration to settle differences. The system has worked well in all States except New South Wales. In that State some people other than honest miners are at work and only humbugs would try to deny it. The trouble is not the fault of the boss.
>
> While men are dying and making sacrifices for the security of Australia, other people are trying to hold up essential war materials such as coal. Men or women who would hold up production are just as much traitors to Australia as deserters in the face of the enemy.[5]

The new regulations were issued on 14th April.[6] They provided that when a coal-mine was open for the purpose of operations fit persons who refused or failed to attend work (and as a result the mine ceased operation, or production was reduced) could be directed, according to age, either into the Citizen Military Forces or into the Army Labour Corps.[7] At the same time the Mobilisation of Services and Property Regulations were amended to "facilitate the service of directions";[8] and these regulations were invoked against strikers at the Lithgow arms factory who were ordered to return to work.

Making the announcement on the Coal Control regulations Curtin said that the causes of many of the strikes were frivolous; two cases could be described as "provocation" on the part of the management. Most of the strikes were against awards or interpretations of awards given by the Central Reference Board or the various local reference boards. Two other main causes were questions of promotion or seniority and inter-union disputes over the membership of some employee.[9]

At this point a clash of views on tactics between the Prime Minister

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[3] War Cabinet Minute 2051, 31 Mar 1942.

[4] War Cabinet Minute 2080, 9 Apr 1942.

[5] Reported in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 Apr 1942.

[6] National Security (Coal Control) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 168, 1942.

[7] The Army Labour Corps (later Service) had come into existence on 4 Feb 1942 under Defence (Labour Corps) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 44, 1942.

[8] Statutory Rules, No. 169, 14 Apr 1942, made notification in the *Commonwealth Gazette* sufficient, or delivery to a particular person by hand or by registered post.

[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 25, p. 11.

and the Minister for Labour was made public by Ward who said that he would not use Rule 77 (the Mobilisation of Services and Property Regulations) and if it was used it would destroy the good work he had done to restore peace. Curtin responded: "Where the Government considers it applicable it will apply Statutory Rule 77."[1] In the following week a report by Ward on his "tour of the industrial areas in an endeavour to secure industrial peace" came before the War Cabinet. The tour had been made after Ward had requested Cabinet on 15th April to defer the application of Rule 77 until he had seen the strikers. He came back with a report which claimed that peace had been restored. A good deal of his report on coal-mining was taken up with blaming the owners and accusing the press of misrepresentation. He made three recommendations on improvement of working conditions underground; and also proposed the appointment of Pit Production Committees, with representation of management and the miners; the investigation of "the failure of the Coal Reference Boards to function satisfactorily"; and "reconsideration of the whole question of the Coal Commission and its personnel". Another recommendation was for the nationalisation of the mining industry or, failing this, a thorough investigation of the whole industry. Apart from the three suggestions on working underground his recommendations were not closely related to existing troubles. The report was not adopted, the War Cabinet deciding instead that a general industrial conference should be convened and asked to make recommendations to the Government. Any special industrial problems that arose at the conference would be the subject of a subsequent conference with the unions concerned.[2]

After vain attempts had been made by union officials to induce striking miners at Millfield, New South Wales, to return to work, Curtin on 11th May, directed the Coal Commissioner to enforce Rule 168 (the Coal Control Regulations) against them. The men returned to work and the orders under the regulations were not applied, the dates on them being left open. On the 19th Curtin had a conference with representatives of the Miners' Federation and on the 22nd with representatives of the miner-owners and, by agreement, arranged a conference with both sides together on 29th and 30th May. This conference agreed upon a "standard code of rules and procedure" in respect of local matters in dispute. At each colliery a committee was to be appointed composed of the colliery manager, two representatives of the management and two representatives of the employees. Any matter in dispute or likely to cause dispute was to be referred in the first instance to this committee, which was purely consultative and had no power to make decisions except by agreement. If the committee could not reach agreement the matter should go to the executive of the respective organisations of owners and miners who should either hold a further conference or submit the dispute to the appropriate Reference Board. Both parties undertook to accept the decision

[1] Metropolitan press of 23 Apr 1942.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 2132, 5 May 1942; Agendum 221/1942.

of the Reference Board and that there should be no stoppage or hold-up without recourse to the above procedure.[3]

Stoppages continued. The War Cabinet decided on 8th July to submit most stringent and far-reaching proposals to the Full Cabinet,[4] and although these were not accepted, the initiative led, after further conferences with the representatives of the union, to the issuing of amendments to the National Security (Coal Control) Regulations[5] by which stoppages of production not authorised by a previous decision of the District Executive of the Miners' Federation were made a breach of the *National Security Act* and offences could be made the subject of summary prosecution before the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, constituted by the Chairman of the Central Coal Reference Board. An important point which the Miners' Federation had established and which it was considered would help to maintain their authority over the miners was that the union executive was left free to call a strike if it thought a strike was the only way to protect its members. At the same time the Federation renewed its pledge to give continuity of operations.

Lest it might be thought that the Federation was not in fact cooperating it is instructive to make a digression to the files of their newspaper *Common Cause*. There, perhaps more dramatically than anywhere else, can be read the story of the struggle for coal production which was taking place in the miners' own ranks. There, too, new sidelights throw their rays on the whole situation, and the character of Mr Harold Clyde Wells,[6] President of the Federation, who stands with Curtin as the chief figure in this vital corner of the war effort, comes out in life size.

Throughout May, June and July *Common Cause* had strongly condemned irresponsible stoppages. On 25th July 1942, for example, a long leading article said:

> Grasp the essential truth! Stoppages which once might have been a weapon in our hands against our enemies are today a weapon in the hands of our enemies against ourselves.

In the same issue Wells stated in a letter:

> Over the last six weeks there has been an average of eight mines idle each day, and at least five of each eight stoppages could have been avoided . . . either every man faces his full responsibility or he must be penalised, disciplined or expelled from the Federation.

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[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 29, pp. 4-9; No. 30, pp. 19-20; *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 1137-41.

[4] War Cabinet Minutes 2242, 8 Jul and 2270, 15 Jul 1942.

[5] Statutory Rules, No. 328, 5 Jul 1942.

[6] H. C. Wells. General President Miners' Federation 1942-47; served on Royal Commission on Mining 1943. Of Cessnock, NSW; b. Cessnock, 3 Nov 1908.
His novel, *The Earth Cries Out* (1950), won a prize in the *Sydney Morning Herald* literary competition in 1948. The development of the Newcastle-Cessnock coalfields from 1905 until after the war of 1939-45 is told as part of the life of John Stephens, a miner who marries and brings up his family in the district. Wells makes Stephens' son a member of the Australian Communist Party, and by this means is able to examine this facet of life on the fields. Wells' own views are clearly the theme of the book: "The men must be taught anew that the past must be forgotten and an industry rebuilt on its ruins, a rich industry made by rich new men who had pride and faith in their jobs. . . . That peace would not be easily won, for alien forces still worked to keep the old bitterness and hatred alive, but won it would be—must be! There was reason to hope—for the first time in forty years."

On 1st August, commenting on the amendment to the Coal Control Regulations, Wells declared that "we make no apology for accepting these regulations, because we feel that in doing this we are standing completely on the firm foundation and discipline on which our union was built, and on the needs of our Australian people".

Strikes continued, and in *Common Cause* of 28th November Wells wrote:

> I feel that the big majority of miners have gained the impression that because the war on the Russian front is now more favourable to our ally, and because the danger of attack or invasion of Australia has lessened, the need for them to maintain total production is not so great. The contrary is the case, and we should throw ourselves even more wholeheartedly into the fight against our enemies.

Attempts were made to show how stoppages directly affected the conduct of the war. For example, in the issue of 5th December 1942 the President's letter spoke of the fighting in New Guinea, the Solomons, Stalingrad and North Africa and declared:

> It is hell over there, and for each day industry loses, the hell is to go on for a day longer, or more men are to lose their lives, or worse still the possibility of our country becoming a war-torn Russia, or our cities becoming a Stalingrad, instead of us being able to tear up the countries and cities of the Fascists with the munitions our products provide.

The front page of the first 1943 issue carried the thick black headlines "ANOTHER MILLION TONS TO SMASH FASCISM", and declared that this was a fitting pledge for the New Year. On page four of the same issue Wells wrote: "Already there have been numerous stoppages, and comrades, I must advise you that someone is going to get hurt if this same irresponsibility continues."

Addressing the annual meeting of the Central Council of the Miners' Federation early in February, Wells emphasised in opening it that the struggle against Fascism was the highest phase of the class struggle which the Federation was pledged to wage. Federation policy, then, must be seen as the need for the unity, full mobilisation and discipline of all members to ensure that the union played its full part in the war. The peril of invasion confronting Australia was as great as ever, with the Japanese massing in the northern islands and preparing bases for offensive action. This situation demanded that members had to give everything in the fight. Only if they did this could they call for more American and British aid —and even that could be at the expense of the European fronts, because they could not completely defeat Japan from Australia. The Second Front was the key to victory, and was the best safeguard for Australia. Indications pointed to the definite possibility of victory in 1943, if full use was made of the resources of the United Nations, in which connection freedom for India and more supplies for China were particularly important. Wells emphasised that after the war the greatest single factor influencing developments would be the strength, leadership and influence of the Soviet Union in conjunction with the powerful Labour movements of the liberated countries and of the world in general. Their strength would, however, depend upon their work now in winning the war.

Turning to Australian affairs Wells' report traced the development of relations with the Curtin Government, which had steadily improved. During the whole period the Federation had retained the right to authorise stoppages, but the refusal of many sections to recognise the need for restraint had forced the Government's hands. The union could no longer claim the right to be the only disciplining authority. The policy being followed by the Government was the only possible policy for today. The union must support the Government and work for even better relations, with full cooperation. The Government could remain only with working-class support, and the only alternative was "a government of the Menzies-Fadden type which would find it increasingly necessary to rely on repressive measures, creating national disunity and seriously damaging the war effort". The Government faced a real challenge, and it was only by active support that it could win through. Factional tendencies within the Labour movement were to be deplored, and would-be splitters should be attacked and isolated.

> We cannot tolerate our Lodges and members trying to "cash in" on the war situation to force higher wages and better conditions. We know that there are some managers deliberately provoking trouble because of their hostility to the Curtin Government and the policy of it basing itself more on the unions. But too many of our people are falling for this provocation and doing just what the provocateurs want them to do—stop work. The best reply to the provocation is to refuse to be provoked, and stay on the job, letting the union handle the matter and indicting the management.

While in some Lodges, the report continued, discipline was being successfully enforced, in other instances little attempt was being made to tackle the problem. When the Government stepped in to take disciplinary measures, they could not logically oppose it, as long as a balance was kept. The union could assist the Government to maintain that balance by the methods mentioned of resisting provocation and indicting the managers responsible.

Wells called for a fight against the "whisperers" in the fields, who were trying to provoke the members into "giving the Government a go for it". He called for a special campaign against absenteeism.

Referring to the cry: "When is the retreat to stop", the General President branded it as reactionary, pointing out that union wages were higher than ever before, seniority was better guarded than ever, promotions were better than ever, safety had never been better, and in many other conditions the position had improved. The union's prestige was also higher than it had ever been.

On 13th March 1943 *Common Cause* published the following report of the Executive's attitude towards strikes:

> Day after day stoppages were robbing the nation of coal. Anarchy was on the upgrade. The unity of the Federation was being undermined. The situation threatened to weaken the position of the Federal Government.
>
> Most disquieting of all was the marked tendency for stoppages to develop into challenges to the union, its policy, its leadership, and to the Government, with

the immediate issue of the dispute fading into the background—with a suggestion of specific organisation behind the stoppage.

The Central Executive arrived at these conclusions:

1. The acceptance of the present policy of the union by the rank and file must be placed beyond all possible doubt.
2. There must be a frank discussion by the rank and file on the role of prominent individuals working systematically against union policy.
3. The Government's attitude to the problems of the industry needed to be thrashed out again.
4. There must be a checking up on the extent to which the coal-owners were observing the spirit of the labour code.

A special "rank and file convention" was opened on 12th April and the following resolutions submitted by the Federation Executive were passed unanimously:

Congress declares that the present war is a people's war in which all possible resources of our country must be mobilised to the fullest extent to defeat the Axis Powers.

We maintain that tremendous responsibility is placed upon all organisations in the Labour movement, particularly on the trade unions, to rally the whole of the Australian people to support this war against Fascism to the full, and supply the needs of our fighting forces.

We recognise that a complete global strategy is necessary, and that all democratic Powers must pull their weight in unity and cooperation, smashing the Fascists on the most vital and strategic fronts in order to divide the Fascist forces, and allow the greatest concentration of forces of the democratic nations.

In this regard we most strongly urge:

1. The immediate opening of a Second Land Front in Europe by the British and American Forces.
2. Additional supplies of war materials to Australia and the Pacific forces from America and Britain.
3. Supplies of war materials to the Chinese armed forces for use against the Japanese Fascists.
4. Release of the Indian Congress leaders and the granting to the Indian people their independence, so allowing the mobilising of the millions in that country for the struggle against Fascism.

We consider that these steps are essential in order to restore the confidence of the democratic people in the war aims of the democratic nations and to bring victory in 1943.

We congratulate the Curtin Labour Government on the work it has done to mobilise and gear our country for a full war effort against the Japanese Fascists.

We recognise that, although weaknesses do exist, this is the only possible Government in the circumstances of today which can hold the leadership of our people and rally the Labour movement in its support to carry through the war in a people's way.

We assure Mr Curtin of our full support in all measures necessary for the building up of a still greater war effort in defence of our country, and in cooperation with our allied nations to rid the world of Fascism.

We consider that the Government should base itself much more firmly upon the Labour movement and the trade unions, discuss and work out the measures necessary in all industries with those bodies, and take still more definite measures to force the owners and managers of industries to submit to the nation's needs until victory is won over Fascism.

We condemn the unprincipled and disruptive efforts of the U.A.P.[7] and U.C.P.[8] leaders in both Houses of Parliament who are trying to make the Government inoperative in order to establish a National Government. At all costs, these representatives of monopoly interests must be defeated.

Convention declares that it is the task of every District, Lodge and member to cooperate fully to gain the maximum production of coal for our industries and provision of munitions, transport and other war needs in the present period. . . .

The unity of the working-class is a vital condition for successful struggle against Fascism. . . . We approve and welcome the proposals submitted by the Communist Party of Australia to the Australian Labour Party and to the State Labour Party in New South Wales.

On 15th May 1943 *Common Cause* reported that the policy adopted by the convention was now "union law".

Throughout the whole of the vehement discussion of coal production on the miners' side had run the constant theme of past injustice to the worker and of a "new order" in the whole industry. They wanted the Coal Commission, or some central body on which miners were represented, to become not simply the regulator of production and distribution but the organiser and controller of the industry. A strong union—and one element in the campaign against strikes was to build the strength and authority of the union—would take a significant place in the future.

Returning from this consideration of the activities of the Miners' Federation, we still encounter the fact of stoppages. In August charges were laid under the new Coal Control Regulations against four miners for absenting themselves from work and against the owners and manager of a Cessnock colliery for failing to keep the mine open. The court found the charges against the miners proved and fined them £5 each and dismissed the charges against the owners and manager. In October an owner was fined £50 and a manager fined £100 for having failed to keep a colliery open. In November ten wheelers were convicted. The Attorney-General, who had responsibility in respect of the prosecutions but not for the industry, commented: "Prosecutions have been successful but, in themselves, are inadequate. The thing goes deeper. In my opinion the industry as a whole —and this applies to both sides—is blameworthy." He mentioned some of the trivial causes of strikes and the impossibility of prosecuting because witnesses would not come forward and added: "The great majority of miners and managers are loyal, but they seem incapable at present of dealing it out to the minority who are not." Evatt announced the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry under the National Security (Inquiries) Regulations to make an immediate investigation of the causes of stoppages in the industry. The miners were represented on the commission.[9] Early in January 1943 Evatt and Beasley, who was closely concerned as Minister for Supply and Shipping, conferred on the serious effect of further stoppages on the supply position. Instructions were given to prosecute one manager and 119 men, and four young men, who were alleged to have been involved in a number of stoppages, were withdrawn from mining,

[7] United Australia Party.
[8] United Country Party. Its coalition with the U.A.P. formed the Opposition in Parliament.
[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 46, pp. 14-16.

their names being given to the manpower authorities as persons no longer in a reserved occupation and available to be directed elsewhere.[1] The Ministers again blamed a minority "consisting in the main of young men" who were refusing to accept the policy and direction of their own trade union. Further prosecutions followed in January, February and March. On 10th March the Coal Commission reported to the Prime Minister that 27 collieries in New South Wales were idle on that day.

At this point the problems of industrial peace in general again came under review. In part the review was related to difficulties between Ministers. The brunt of action in the coalfields had been taken by Curtin, Evatt and Beasley and not by Ward, as Minister for Labour, although on his part Ward had his complaint, already mentioned, that there were too many authorities outside the Department of Labour and National Service concerned in industrial relations. The claim which Ward made for the concentration of all authority regarding labour in one field was, however, too sweeping and a denial of the basic requirement of the Cabinet system that Ministers have to be able to work together and with a shared responsibility one towards another and each towards all.[2]

During May the Full Cabinet considered again the whole question of industrial unrest and decided that any person in a protected undertaking, which meant in effect an industry regarded as essential for the war effort, should be compelled to carry on his duties, either as employer or employee, under threat that if he did not he would lose the protection of a reserved occupation and be drafted forthwith into military service or other work.[3] This was brought into effect by amendment to the National Security (Supplementary) Regulations on 27th May and 1st June,[4] and on 3rd June the term "protected undertaking" was specifically stated to cover the coal mines.[5]

The Government had now armed itself with strong powers. It had also improved and extended the machinery for the settlement of disputes and for the investigation of the reasons for stoppages. It also took advantage again of consultation with the trade unions, a special conference being called for 18th and 19th June.

Seven of the sixteen Ministers who attended the convention spoke: Curtin was not present and Forde presided. Forde and Beasley spoke at length, Forde traversing the military position, Beasley the needs of production. Both referred to the elections, only two months away. There were only two factors likely to prevent the Federal Labour Government being returned—internecine strife within the Labour Movement, and secondly an extension of industrial strikes and absenteeism which would be exploited by the political opponents for political ends. In talks with members of the fighting forces about strikes and absenteeism Forde said he found that they were greatly resented within the services and there was no doubt

[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 49, pp. 39-41.
[2] Full Cabinet Agendum 473, 2 Apr 1943.
[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 58, pp. 45-6.
[4] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 59, pp. 38-40. Statutory Rules 1943, No. 114, 27 May; No. 146, 1 Jun.
[5] *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 120, 3 Jun 1943.

that this resentment was likely to result in a great number of votes being lost if the position became accentuated.

The most serious problem concerning the Government was coal production; the Government fully appreciated the very unhappy past of the industry and the psychology which developed with the industry, but in the face of national disaster there could not be any justification for stoppages when the miners realised there were only three weeks' supplies on hand. The Government appealed to the representatives of the coal-miners to bring all their influence and power on the small minority in the coal-mines who were by their disruptive tactics responsible for the loss of so much coal.

Stoppages in the shipping industry were also criticised. If, said Beasley, these disputes involved principles for which they had fought for many years he could quite understand the position, but in most of these disputes there were no real issues at all involved.

These Ministers, and most of those who spoke after them, paid tribute to the efforts of the trade unions: emphasised the achievements of the Labour Government, but spoke up frankly and firmly about the dangers of continued industrial unrest.

Ward, the last Minister to speak, the only one on the second day of the conference, which was otherwise given up to the trade union representatives, was less forthright and more ingratiating. A great deal of credit was due to the Government but "a great proportion of that credit should also go to the trades union movement for the splendid work which it had done. When the Government appealed to the trades union movement for a truce it must, at the same time, assure the trades union movement that so far as its problems were concerned they would at all times receive sympathetic consideration." He criticised wage-pegging under the Economic Organisation Regulations, and manpower arrangements (and thereby implied criticism of his Government). He deplored the leaving of "quite a lot of purely National matters" to the States; and the decision to use six State organisations (for manpower) instead of establishing Commonwealth control. On compulsory unionism he felt that "if there were to be restrictions in regard to contracts for work" the Government could very effectively help the trades union movement. Ward referred to his efforts to introduce compulsory unionism into his own department and of the opposition of the Director-General of Manpower; to his efforts to "direct non-unionists to other employment, but after attempting it he found he had no legal power to give a direction to the Director-General of Manpower on this question if such direction was for the purpose of solving an industrial dispute". He referred to the difficulties surrounding the Women's Employment Board. In his view "there were certain people in this country who were deliberately out to embarrass the Government with all the means at their disposal".

The union representatives who followed (about 150 were present, and 17 spoke) made no tangible contribution to the problem of industrial unrest. They referred to particular problems, and made particular com-

plaints—the effects of lack of supplies in Queensland on the vote there; the need for a clean-up in the administration of the Allied Works Council as "the movement was just screaming out for somebody to take action"; the trouble on the waterfront caused by "Ministers seeing people who were not authorised"; the lack of newsprint for papers. Wells, for the coal-miners, referred to the fact that the Allied Works Council, about which much had been said, was one of the penalties the Government decided upon for miners if they were found guilty of taking part in an illegal stoppage. But coal-miners were working 600 feet or so below the surface, and "the sooner the Government realised" this fact "the better it would be for both parties". "Unless the Government recognised the workers' present opposition to the administration of the C.C.C. then they were not going to learn anything from this convention of Trade Union leaders." G. W. S. Grant, General Secretary of the Miners' Federation, announced that "the man had not yet been born who could prevent stoppages in the coal industry. They could minimise the stoppages but to bring about a total abolition of them was a human impossibility."

The convention afforded an opportunity for the A.C.T.U. to hold a conference immediately afterwards; as a formal meeting between Cabinet Ministers and union representatives it had a nominal value; but it was more interesting as a disclosure of the relative positions adopted by members of the Ministry and the trade unions, than as an objective discussion of the problems of industrial unrest. The Government's activity in the industrial field, its attempts at streamlining the arbitration machinery, the powers it had acquired, the exhortations it had published, received no objective discussion.

The result of this activity, nevertheless, had been to reduce considerably the time lost by disputes. The number of disputes was as high as it had ever been, but the number of working days lost was lower. The large number of disputes has to be related, of course, to the increase in the number of men and women in employment. As earlier in the war, the chief trouble was in New South Wales. The quarterly figures for the period under review are shown in the accompanying table.

	Number of Disputes		Working Days Lost	
	Australia	N.S.W.	Australia	N.S.W.
1942				
March quarter . .	123	114	55,394	51,019
June quarter . .	181	168	137,763	113,928
September quarter .	129	119	85,731	78,556
December quarter .	169	151	99,307	77,632
1943				
March quarter . .	218	192	275,593	237,762
June quarter . .	212	192	285,645	226,367
Totals . .	1,032	936	939,433	785,264

The totals for the six quarters from March 1940 to June 1941 had been, in the same order, 592 and 531 disputes and 1,763,075 and 1,429,066 working days lost.

The most serious difficulties were still in coal-mining. With great effort a record Australian wartime production of 14,903,489 tons of black coal had been achieved in 1942, but this was still below the target and the most rigid economy in its use had been necessary, with curtailment of some services.[6]

In examining the results, too, it was discovered that the loss of coal through strikes was almost equally matched by the loss of coal through absenteeism. In other industries absenteeism was often a more serious cause of loss of production than stoppages. The term covered all manner of unauthorised absence from work, ranging from genuine cases of illness to taking a few days off for the fun of it. A report prepared by the Industrial Welfare Division of the Department of Labour and National Service in 1943 estimated that the average loss of time was 7 per cent for men and 13 per cent for women. About a third of the absences were due to sickness, accidents and the ills of life generally, and the remainder were due to a variety of causes some of which, according to the compilers of the report, could be reduced by better arrangements for shopping, transport and the care of children and by improved conditions inside the factories. A report by the Director-General of Munitions for April 1942, when the losses by absenteeism were first becoming noticeable, showed wide variations from factory to factory and an even wider disparity between different classes of workers in the same factory. For example, the loss through absence of the women on the office and salaried staff of one government works was 0.2 per cent, while the loss through absence of women factory hands in the same works was 9.2 per cent. There was least absenteeism on pay day and most on the day after pay day. There was more absence on night shifts than on day shifts. There was more absence when long shifts were worked than after short shifts.

From an early stage attempts were made to remedy the faults to which these observations pointed, by giving closer attention to factory conditions, accommodation and transport, and industrial welfare generally. Attempts were made to stimulate enthusiasm with talks on patriotic duty, the trade unions cooperating, in accordance with their pledges to the Prime Minister, in a campaign against slacking on the job. Under the National Security Regulations to which reference has already been made, action could be taken against unauthorised absence, and for the New Year holiday season at the beginning of 1943 the powers were added to by Holidays and Annual Leave Regulations,[7] making it an offence to stay away from work on New Year's Day. The prosecution of 250 workers followed immediately after the holiday and of some hundreds more later.

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[6] The importance of New South Wales' production of black coal is seen in the following table:

	Tons
New South Wales	12,236,219
Victoria	312,854
Queensland	1,637,148
South Australia	1,650
Western Australia	581,176
Tasmania	134,442
Total	14,903,489

[7] Statutory Rules, No. 418, 1 Oct 1942.

Among the subsidiary or technical questions which did enter largely into political controversy were the question of compulsory unionism and the regulation of the employment of women. Compulsory unionism was strongly advocated by trade unions and by some Labour members of Parliament both on the ground that a worker who gained benefits as a result of the efforts of trade unions should subscribe to their costs and on the ground that the unions were entitled to build up and preserve their industrial strength. Under the pressure from trade union leaders the matter was considered by the Full Cabinet on 17th February 1942, by the War Cabinet on 9th March, and again by the Full Cabinet on 5th May. In general the attitude of the Government, as disclosed by their subsequent actions, was that while they would not go to the length of imposing compulsory unionism, they would use what other means they could to influence non-unionists to become members of unions and would see to it that contracts with the Government were carried out by union labour.

The protests of the Opposition culminated in a debate on 17th September 1942, on a motion by Menzies that the House adjourn. Menzies, granting that the Government had not introduced any Bill or regulation providing for compulsory unionism, quoted five examples of the other ways in which it had sought the same ends. The Department of Supply and Development had insisted, as a condition of contract, that clothing manufacturers have 100 per cent of union employees. The Departments of Munitions and the Navy had informed their staffs that the benefits of awards and determinations would only be extended to members of unions or associations and to returned soldiers. The Civil Constructional Corps had issued circulars listing a union ticket among the "items of personal equipment" men should bring with them when going to defence jobs and, in the Manpower organisation, the Minister had sought information as to which members of his staff were members of trade unions. The objection raised by the Opposition was to the element of compulsion, Menzies arguing that the freedom of association also must mean freedom not to associate.

Evatt, in reply, denied that the Government was trying to introduce compulsory unionism. Apparently leaving the cases quoted by Menzies to be answered by the Ministers concerned, he said that the only action taken by the Government was to make two special regulations, in November 1941 and March 1942, enabling the Arbitration Court to grant preference to unionists in the clothing trade and, on the second occasion, to any other trade whose case came before the court for consideration.

Less temperate Labour speakers retorted with charges of sweating and unlimited profit-making against employers.

Blackburn, while favouring compulsory unionism, said he did not like the manner in which it had been introduced by the Government in this instance. If compulsory unionism was to be enforced the method which the Government adopted should be such as would allow Parliament an opportunity to discuss it.

The debate lapsed under the Standing Orders.[8]

The criticism was renewed in the following week during the debate on the Estimates. Curtin repeated a statement which he had made on another occasion, that the Australasian Council of Trade Unions had asked the Government to enact compulsory unionism but the Government had not done so.[9] Under the fire of interjections he said, in respect of jobs under the Allied Works Council: "Any man who has been a unionist in his civil life and is called up to work in accordance with awards made by the courts, which awards prescribe that trade unionism shall operate, is expected to continue to be a unionist and to pay his dues to the union."[1]

From the trade union movement the advocacy was unqualified. Special Labour conferences at Melbourne in November 1942 and January 1943 decided to add compulsory unionism to the party platform, and requested the Government to provide for compulsory unionism by regulation.

The increased employment of women presented a difficult problem to a Labour Government.[2] As previously recounted, on 15th December 1941 the Cabinet decided "as a war measure to approve of the principle of the extensive employment of women in industries where men are not available in sufficient numbers to attain the scale of production approved as a war objective". Curtin gave a public undertaking in the name of the Government "that all women employed under the conditions approved shall be employed only for the duration of the war, and shall be replaced by men as they become available". He promised that a Sub-Committee of Cabinet which had been appointed to confer with representatives of the trade unions and employers would "deal with the matter with full regard to prevention of an invasion of men's work by cheap female labour".[3] Some of the difficulties originated from the peacetime practice of paying women a lower rate than men, the arguments in favour of that system being a lower estimate of women's ability and, more importantly, that if a woman supporting only herself were paid the same as a man supporting a wife and family the hardworking housewife was at a disadvantage. If, in order to protect the occupations of men from the competition of cheap labour, the unions were to insist that women be paid the same amounts as the men whom they replaced, then two disparities would be created—one between the women and the men still working alongside them, and the other between the women war workers and women still working in other occupations, perhaps more highly skilled, at a lower wage. Another set of difficulties originated from the unions' fear of unemployment after the war and their desire to make absolutely sure that the men could get their jobs back as soon as they wanted them. In this connection they

[8] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 172, pp. 448-67.

[9] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 172, pp. 73 and 729.

[1] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 172, p. 729. For further examples of the application of the policy see pp. 1422-3 and 1485-6.

[2] For a discussion of the employment of women in the early years of the war see *The Government and the People, 1939-1941,* pp. 401-8.

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 11, p. 13.

feared that women, proving themselves wholly competent on process work, would be more acceptable to employers if their labour was cheaper. Further considerations were the doubt whether women were as strong and reliable as men on the job and the doubts about the economic and social effects of paying a woman a man's wage. Consequently there were conflicting arguments among Government supporters to give women "equal pay for equal work", to prevent women from being employed on certain jobs, or to provide that they had to leave the jobs as soon as the war was over.

In March 1942 it was announced that a Women's Employment Board would be established, consisting of a chairman and two representatives each of the employers and employees. Employers wishing to engage women in work usually performed by men would apply to the board which, if it granted permission, would also set the female rate of pay at a percentage of the male rate, but not less than 60 per cent. The board's decisions were to be filed in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.[4]

In May Menzies unsuccessfully moved in the House for the disallowance of the regulation. He argued that the creation of the board cut across the principle of adhering to arbitration by setting up a new tribunal to deal not with an industry but with a class of worker who might be found in any one of a hundred different industries. The constitution of the board subtracted from the functions of the Arbitration Court. The board was instructed to fix the wages of women as a percentage of men's wages solely on the count of efficiency whereas for many years the basic wage had been determined on a family or social principle and the stipulation of a percentage in the regulations would operate to alter the percentages already prescribed by industrial tribunals. The composition of the board also was contrary to the customary practice, for the Government, under the plea that it was one of the biggest employers of women, had appointed as one of the employers' representatives on the board a woman who was in fact an employee and had for many years been a trade union official.[5]

A similar attempt at disallowance in the Senate also failed in May, when Senator Johnston,[6] a Western Australian Country Party member, voted with the Government,[7] and another Opposition senator was absent. But on 23rd September, a fortnight after Johnston had died, and with all members present, the Senate, in which the Opposition still had a majority of one, succeeded in disallowance of the regulations constituting the board. The arguments educed were that the board was inexperienced and political in character, that it was wrong to have a wage-fixing authority operating outside the Commonwealth and State Arbitration Courts, and that, in spite of the pegging of wages, the board was in fact permitting increases.[8]

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[4] National Security (Employment of Women) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 146, 25 Mar 1942. Amended by Statutory Rules, Nos. 236 (22 May), 263 (10 Jun), 294 (30 Jun), 381 (2 Sep) and 393 (10 Sep).

[5] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 171, pp. 1432-47 and 1465-89.

[6] E. B. Johnston. Senator for WA 1929-42. B. Geraldton, WA, 11 Jan 1880. Died 6 Sep 1942.

[7] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 170, pp. 1079-1104.

[8] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 172, pp. 755-97.

The Government maintained the validity of the board by passing a statutory rule under the *National Security Act* on the 24th,[9] and in the next week brought down a Women's Employment Bill, providing for regulations which were, in effect, the same as those which had been disallowed.

Curtin said in Parliament on 24th September that the Government expected to bring at least 64,000 more women into factory employment in the next six months. If they could not be found, fewer men could be released for the fighting services and the army would go short of essential equipment. Because appropriate rates of pay and appropriate conditions of employment had to be fixed, the Women's Employment Board was essential. It could also examine each individual case and decide to what extent the existing restrictions on the employment of women imposed by the States should be overridden by Commonwealth powers.[1] On the 29th he made the further point that the general level of wages would continue to be determined by the Arbitration Court and the Women's Employment Board would be able to handle more expeditiously what was the relative rate for women, having regard to their efficiency, and to what extent the working conditions laid down by the Court should be modified in respect of women. He spoke of women as a temporary substitute for men, and stated the two objectives: "We have to ensure that men who are displaced do not have their economic standards eaten into by the incursion of women as a permanent economic feature. We must also keep faith with the women of this country, and ensure that, if they are capable of doing as much war work as men they shall be paid as if they were men." The Bill was agreed to.[2]

The board was reconstituted with a membership of five, comprising the chairman, two employees' representatives, one Commonwealth Government representative (who was the same woman employee who had served before), and one employers' representative. As the employers' organisations did not nominate a representative the Government selected one for them. Because they still regarded the board as a political body the Opposition majority in the Senate, in March 1943, passed a motion disallowing a regulation[3] which made the board's decisions a common rule binding on all employers in a trade. The Government responded with an amended regulation[4] which gave the board power to extend its decisions to include other employers where it saw fit.

Though surrounded with political dispute, the board did facilitate the employment of women in war industries, inasmuch as it fixed their rates of pay and it did apply itself to the novel problems in conditions of work which were presented by the transfer of some tens of thousands of women to occupations and to industries in which they had scarcely ever been seen

[9] Statutory Rules 1942, No. 410.

[1] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 172, pp. 855-7.

[2] Act No. 55 of 1942. *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 172, pp. 1069-75; the remainder of the second reading debate in the House of Representatives, pp. 1235-85, canvasses thoroughly the various facets of the problem.

[3] Statutory Rules, No. 548, 23 Dec 1942.

[4] Statutory Rules, No. 92, 8 Apr 1943.

before. It could be argued, too, that it did this work more promptly than the Arbitration Court would have done it, even with the aid of special tribunals, in the process of hearing applications for new awards or variations of existing awards. The board could not, however, handle all the problems created by this transfer of women to industry and it helped to raise a few new ones of its own. Perhaps the most serious was the disparity created between various women's occupations. Low-skilled women replacing low-skilled men might find themselves far better paid than highly-trained women in traditional women's occupations. The nurse could obtain more pay and shorter hours by leaving her hospital and becoming a factory hand.

In January 1943 the Full Cabinet itself had recognised the seriousness of the anomalies that had been created and the fact that the drift "from women's work to men's work" had created numerous difficulties in the industries or services which the women had vacated. One solution would have been to give the Women's Employment Board control of employment of women in all industries; another, to make changes in the Arbitration Court. The Cabinet approved the latter,[5] but it would appear that implementing the decision was not easy. In March the whole question of wages policy was again the subject of a submission by Ward, who this time put the alternatives bluntly: give the court power to vary awards having in mind Women's Employment Board decisions; apply the principle to all women in industry; or continue in "present unsatisfactory conditions of protests, stoppages, absenteeism".[6] There was, he contended, a basic contradiction between the Employment of Women Regulations and the Economic Organisation Regulations.

In May Ward presented draft regulations to free the courts from the restrictions imposed by the Economic Organisation Regulations in respect of women's wages;[7] and again in June he pressed the amendment of the Economic Organisation Regulations.[8]

In June 1943 the validity of the regulations under the *Women's Employment Act* was contested in the High Court; Judge Foster[9] resigned from the chairmanship of the Women's Employment Board on 1st June 1943, and Ward, who wanted an increase of the Arbitration Court judges by at least one, suggested that Foster fill this vacancy.

On 19th July 1944 National Security (Female Minimum Rates) Regulations[1] empowered the Arbitration Court to "make a comprehensive investigation into minimum rates of wage payable to females in certain industries". For the purpose of making determinations the court would be freed from the restrictions of National Security (Economic Organisa-

[5] Full Cabinet Agendum 423, 11 Jan 1943.
[6] Full Cabinet Agendum 458, 15 Mar 1943.
[7] Full Cabinet Agendum 490, 18 May 1943.
[8] Full Cabinet Agendum 504, 21 June 1943.
[9] Hon Mr Justice A. W. Foster. Judge of Vic County Court 1927-44; Chairman, Women's Employment Board 1942-43; Judge, Commonwealth Arbitration Court 1944-62. B. Beechworth, Vic, 28 Jul 1886. Died 26 Nov 1962.
[1] Statutory Rules 1944, No. 108.

tion) Regulations.[2] Industries which might be referred to the court were those which the Governor-General, by order, declared to be necessary.

Finally on 11th October 1944 the Attorney-General and the Minister for Labour announced that Judge Foster would be appointed to the Arbitration Court; the work performed under the regulations by the board would be transferred to the court, and the board would be dissolved.[3]

Meanwhile the transfer of women to industry in 1943 was growing. By June 1943 there were 190,000 women in direct war work including the services and the total of occupied women was 840,000. This included 44,700 in the defence services, 39,400 in government and semi-government munitions, shipbuilding and aircraft works, 106,000 in other defence works, about 80,000 in factories engaged in civil production, 27,000 in transport and communications, 158,000 in commerce and finance and 55,000 in rural industry. The new recruits to labour, that is those who before the war had not been working, totalled about 127,000. Some of these had taken the place of men in commerce and industry but they also provided a large number of the recruits for the services and for defence industries. About 69,000 women had moved from civil factories to war work.[4]

The strength of the women's services had grown by June 1943 to 18,210 A.W.A.S.; 16,243 W.A.A.A.F.; 1,408 W.R.A.N.S.; and 8,846 Nursing Services. In addition a Women's Land Army and Auxiliary were 2,205 strong by the end of September 1943.[5] There had been privately-sponsored land armies among the voluntary women's organisations at the beginning of the war, and on 27th July 1942 the Minister for Labour and National Service had approved of the organisation on a national basis of an Australian Women's Land Army functioning under the Director-General of Manpower, consisting of women who enrolled for continuous rural work (the Army) or for casual, seasonal or vacational work (the Auxiliary); the private organisations would be assimilated.[6] This organisation was taken into consideration in the discussions by the committees which preceded the War Commitments Committee, and in October 1942 the Minister for Labour recommended an improved status for the Land Army, to make it, in effect, the fourth women's official service. The decision was deferred, but ultimately received the Full Cabinet approval on 16th January 1943.[7]

The "charter" for the Land Army and Auxiliary provided for an establishment of 6,000 members of which 3,500 were to be enrolled by 30th June 1943.[8] The organisation was to be formally constituted under National Security Regulations but this was not done and it continued under the

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[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 85, pp. 20-1. Part V, which was the relevant section of the Economic Organisation Regulations, had pegged wages at 10th February 1942.

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 91, pp. 8-9. Statutory Rules, No. 149, 12 Oct 1944.

[4] *Facts and Figures of Australia at War,* No. 2, Sep 1943.

[5] *Facts and Figures of Australia at War,* No. 3, p. 20.

[6] Full Cabinet Agendum 374, 19 Oct 1942, recounts the decision of 27 Jul 1942. W. C. Wurth, *Control of Manpower in Australia, February 1942-September 1944,* p. 205, records the establishment by "Cabinet approval" in July 1942.

[7] Full Cabinet Agendum 413; *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 50, p. 6.

[8] Wurth, p. 207.

authority provided by the Cabinet decision until disbanded. "Recruitment of women for the organisation was restricted to those of suitable age and physical standard not employed in rural industry who were prepared to enrol for a period of not less than twelve months continuous service, or continuously for the duration of the war. Women who, though otherwise suitable, could not conveniently undertake to serve for a period of not less than twelve months continuous service were enrolled in the Land Army Auxiliary and were utilised for work assignments of a seasonal character only."[9]

The practice already established, that members would receive award or district rates continued, but an additional provision stipulated that, irrespective of the weather, a minimum of 30 shillings a week plus keep, or 50 shillings a week without keep, should be paid. Training establishments were set up, and although at first the issue of clothing and personal requirements was meagre, finally members came to be issued with practically all necessary working clothes and equipment, including towels and crockery.

4—"A SEASON OF AUSTERITY"

In a speech at the Brisbane City Hall on 19th August 1942 the Prime Minister said: "I ask you to reconcile yourselves to a season of austerity, to make your habits of life conform to those of the fighting forces. The civil population can learn to discipline itself; it can learn to go without." At another part of his speech he asked his listeners to give more of themselves to their country, to "avoid wasting the substance of this country, which is so needed for the imperative purposes of war", to stop spending so much money on intoxicants, holidays, theatres or "any of the extravagances". "Every day," he said, "you read about some man you knew dying fighting far distant from the places of entertainment, of even relaxation, fighting with all he knows for your defence. Let us think about them a little more and think about ourselves a little less." There should be no industrial stoppages, no complaints from those who were taxed, and no grievances from those who could not get something they would like to have.[1]

In the following week he announced, as part of the arrangements for raising a loan of £100,000,000 on the home market, that an Austerity Campaign would be launched—a campaign for a new way of life that would strip away "everything that, in any way, resembles a peacetime way of living".[2]

On the third anniversary of the outbreak of the European war the campaign was launched by a national broadcast by the Prime Minister, preceded by a grim presentation over the air of the story of three years of war. Curtin's own conclusion from that history was that the enemy had gained all the time and still held the initiative.

[9] Production Executive Agendum 96/1945, Decision 768, 27 Sep 1945, which approved the disbanding of the Army and the Auxiliary.
[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 38, pp. 7-8.
[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements,* No. 38, pp. 8-11.

I am no believer in the fear psychology (he said) but if we do not strip ourselves to save our country, then the enemy will do it with a ruthless efficiency and with a maximum of misery that can have a counterpart only in the imagination. Consider our fate should he be victorious! What will we have then? . . . Today Port Moresby and Darwin are the Singapores of Australia. If those two places fall, then, inevitably, we are faced with a bloody struggle on our soil when we will be forced to fight grimly, city by city, village by village, until our fair land may become a blackened ruin. We will fight. Our record is proof of that, but what of the cost? Therefore, the Australian Government says that the cost must be paid now—not to an invading enemy—but in equipping our fighting men so that they will hold Port Moresby and Darwin; so that they will hold this Australian bastion for democracy and, finally, wrest the initiative from the enemy.

Our fate is in the balance as I speak to you. The Battle of the Solomons is not only vital in itself, but, as part of a continuing action which will go on, it represents a phase of the Japanese drive in which is wrapped up invasion of Australia. At this stage it would be mischievous to conjecture as to whether the outcome of the Battle of the Solomons will give us a further breathing space or whether it will mean disaster, followed swiftly by a direct Japanese threat and thrust at our shores. But I do tell you that we are faced with an enemy of great power, devilish ingenuity and regimented efficiency. We cannot expect to rely on strokes of luck nor to survive mistakes. The Japanese are waging war to the death. We seven millions of Australians in this, the place where are gathered the greatest number of British-speaking people south of the Equator, must, individually, wage a war to the death, just as though we were, man for man, engaged in bloody combat.

The Government, therefore, cannot permit anything to stand in the way of placing the nation on a full war footing and it must, by every means in its power, bring those sections . . . who are thoughtless of what is involved to a salutary realisation of the situation. To that end, Cabinet has made decisions which will be the Government's lead in the austerity campaign which is opened as from tonight.[3]

The specific measures which were ushered in by this account of the war situation were intended to restrict horse and dog races, raise the tax on all entertainments, reduce drinking, smoking and the eating of expensive meals, check black-marketing and take away the glamour from the "artificial life" led by those people whose doings are described as social news.

It was plain, however, that the Prime Minister had planned an eloquent speech for other reasons than to announce such decisions. His main objective was "to bring the people to the realisation that only by an austere way of life can we muster our national strength to the pitch required for victory". He read out a pledge which he asked every Australian to take in order that they might strip themselves of "every selfish, comfortable habit, every luxurious impulse, every act, word or deed that retards the victory march". The pledge, in six short paragraphs, was an emotional recital rather than a precise commitment—a promise to fight and work as Australians had never fought or worked before, to cut from life "every luxury, every relaxation, every temptation to slack", to forget privileges, comfort and rest and, throwing everything into the struggle, let nothing block the way to the attainment of victory.

Other objectives were to obtain subscriptions to the loan and to stress

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 39, p. 18.

the importance of supply and production in order to stimulate industry and discourage slacking and inefficiency.

The Prime Minister spoke with fervour and great earnestness, and he regarded it himself as one of his more important broadcasts. It would be easy to link the appeal he made with the launching of the loan campaign and to point to the sound economic arguments of using every available means to reduce the spending by the people of the additional income distributed among them as the result of the increased war effort, and thus help to lessen the pressure of inflation. That was the argument for raising the loan. It would be easy, too, to recognise the importance of stimulating the people by every means possible to devote more and more of their time and energy to the war effort. As will be seen later, there was some occasion to make such an appeal. Yet those two reasons alone would not be sufficient to explain fully the emotional warmth which Curtin brought to the launching of his austerity campaign. There was a moral idea behind his words—the idea that a nation only reaches her full strength when both in personal standards of living and in their subordination of self-interest her people rise above themselves. He preached austerity as a good end in itself.

> Austerity means a new way of life; a new spirit of action to do the things the nation needs and not to do the things that weaken the nation. I am convinced that the aspect of our national life which gives the greatest scope for the further development of our war effort is the human element. Improvement in the personal quality of our manpower automatically reacts on the whole war organisation. The great challenge today is to each individual—not to the other fellow—to forget self and order his or her life for the welfare of the nation. Every citizen of this great Commonwealth must bring into subjection self-interest, ill-will between employer and employee, suspicion and the baser things which are destructive of national life and then give full scope to the development of goodwill, selflessness, honesty, sacrifice, courage. This means clean and honest thinking and acting and will be reflected in sound homes, teamwork in industry, and cooperation throughout the nation. The strength of a nation is determined by the character of its people and so, in this hour of peril, I call on each individual to examine himself honestly and, having done so, to go to his task guided by a new conscience and a new realisation of his responsibility to his nation and to each individual member of it. By so doing we will be a nation which is morally and spiritually rearmed and be adequate not only to meet the tasks of war but also the tasks of peace.[4]

In his own personal life Curtin was now practising the austerity which he preached, living severely, permitting no indulgence, devoting his whole life unsparingly to the duties of his office. He took on himself as a personal burden the whole weight of care of a nation at war.

Against the fervency of his appeal and the rigidity of the code he imposed on himself, the various executive acts by which the austerity campaign was enforced on the people may seem banal. They were rules to curb spending and perhaps make the citizens worthier in the process. The first action was against racing. The purpose was both to check the orgy of betting that had come with the increased circulation of money and to cut down the claims of the racing industry on men, supplies and trans-

[4] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 39, pp. 19-20.

port. The State Governments were asked to use the power given to them by the Commonwealth to restrict further the number of horse-racing, greyhound coursing and trotting meetings. None of the States did so. Curtin himself, after hearing representatives of the racing clubs and resisting various pressures, brought down proposals to the Full Cabinet. The final decision was to have races only on Saturdays, to have one raceless Saturday each month, to limit the number of events on a race programme, and to restrict the publication of form, comments and tips. The big holiday and carnival meetings in each State were exempted from the regulations.[5] Later, restrictions on the transport of racehorses and greyhounds were introduced. Attempts, with an extremely limited success, were also made to check off-the-course betting by "bootleg bookmakers". The war effort of race promoters and racegoers, however, was chiefly in the endurance of difficulty to maintain their customary habits.

The next attempt was to reduce "the disproportionate expenditure on drink".[6] A previous attempt had been made by the Minister for War Organisation of Industry to save manpower, conserve materials and reduce excessive drinking and drunkenness by restricting the production of beer and other alcoholic beverages by amounts of from 28 per cent to 33⅓ per cent according to the class of residential area, and by limiting the hours of trading in liquor to seven a day. The Minister for Trade and Customs made a note on a file that this attempt cost his department the time spent in handling 6,038 letters, 8,150 telephone calls and 5,280 interviews and did not stop excessive drinking. Production had been cut in the April-June quarter of 1942 from 9,373,000 gallons to 7,201,000 gallons a month. There were mixed views in the party whether the restriction should continue but the Full Cabinet had decided to adhere to it on 3rd August 1942, and at a Premiers' Conference on 10th August the State Governments undertook to reduce trading hours by at least another hour a day, to impose drastic penalties on hotel-keepers for serving men in uniform with excessive quantities of bottled liquor, to exclude women from public bars, to make drinking in parks and public places unlawful and to tighten up the laws in other respects. Curtin's austerity proposals were to use the deterrent effect of a substantial increase in excise and to inform the States that if their measures did not succeed the Commonwealth Government would introduce other measures.[7]

The attempts to restrict drinking were resisted and evaded. They saved some manpower and materials in the breweries but may have lost manpower not only to black marketing but by reason of the fact that drinkers either waited for the beer to come "on" or, when it was "on" hastened to the pub so as not to miss their share. They made it difficult and in some cases impossible for some sections of the community to obtain liquor. They made no perceptible difference to excessive drinking, and drunken-

[5] National Security (Racing Restriction) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 398, 17 Sep 1942; amended by No. 419, 1 Oct and No. 434, 9 Oct.

[6] Control of Liquor Order, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 85, 16 Mar 1942.

[7] Full Cabinet Agenda 300 and 301 and attached notes. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 24, pp. 22-3; No. 35, p. 15; No. 37, pp. 3-4.

ness in public places continued to be a common feature of Australian city life throughout the war.

The political pressure in respect of both racing and drinking was constant and unvaried. It came from those who had ownership in the two industries; it came from the customers. It came from trade unions and from the wealthy. Wartime experience makes it clear that beer and betting mean more than anything else in life to a considerable number of Australians.

Meals in public eating places were limited to three courses in order to check luxury spending. The newspapers were asked to give up printing social news or photographs of persons not engaged in war activities. Penalties for breaches of the prices regulations were made stiffer. A Black Marketing Bill was introduced into Parliament in September. Its title was not well chosen for what it did was to provide more drastic punishment for all the major offences already constituted under the National Security Regulations dealing with prices, liquid fuel, rationing of goods and services, the restriction of stocks and the control of production and the acquisition of primary products. It was really a measure designed to check any form of excessive profit-making or evasion of the controls mentioned. It was passed with the blessing of both parties.[8] Most speakers agreed that various forms of evasion were growing and that stricter action was necessary.

The fact that the Prime Minister had thought it desirable to introduce an "austerity" campaign with such a note of urgency would appear to suggest that there was serious concern in his mind at the state of the nation and that there had been some hanging back by the people from the sacrifices which were demanded of them. Yet it will be noted that the concrete measures which he found it necessary to announce immediately referred only to excessive drinking, betting and horse-racing and black marketing so-called. Those evils, though clearly apparent to anyone passing through any city, were not universal. There were hundreds of thousands of sober, industrious, home-keeping citizens who never got drunk, did not bet, and had neither opportunity nor inclination for sharp trading of any kind.

Other measures of "austerity" had already been imposed or were being imposed on the people by the controls and restrictions introduced by Production Executive. The rationing of clothing and footwear by means of a coupon system was introduced on 15th June 1942. Since May an attempt to stem the rush to buy, and prevent the depletion of stocks, had been made by restricting the sales of clothing to 75 per cent of the 1941 level. Thus, each day the stores would display their day's quota of articles, the rush set in early, late-comers went around looking for something which did not bear the sign "quota sold" and everything that could be bought was bought by those who could take time off to go shopping. There was a good deal of popular criticism until the coupon system was introduced. So many indications had been given of the Govern-

[8] Act No. 49 of 1942. *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, pp. 862-7 and 975-1001.

ment's intentions that its introduction had been preceded by a rush to buy. The coupon system imposed a cut of about 40 per cent on normal clothing purchases for men, about 33 per cent for women and 20 per cent for boys and girls in the 5-15 years age group. Tea was brought under the coupon system on 6th July 1942, and the individual ration for most of the currency of rationing was two ounces a week. Sugar was rationed at the rate of one pound a head a week on 31st August 1942. Butter was not rationed until 7th June 1943 and the amount was half a pound a week. By and large the coupon rationing system was accepted without a grumble and made citizens careful rather than threadbare. The difficulty experienced by most citizens was not lack of coupons but difficulty in finding what they wanted. A man might wait for half a year for a shirt and a woman for stockings. One matter of State which rose as high as being included in a submission to the Full Cabinet was an instruction to employers to remove any ban on girls going without stockings to work.[9]

Petrol had been rationed from October 1940 and the issue for the civilian without claim to special consideration—by 1942—gave him about 45 to 60 miles of running per month. Car tyres and tubes were only available to persons classified as "essential users" after application for a permit to buy and on production of the worn-out article.

Another form of rationing was carried out at the source of distribution. Tobacco had been rationed by limiting the output of manufacturers, and the Tobacco Manufacturers Advisory Committee was given legal status in February 1942.[1] Retailers were supplied on the basis of quotas related to the amount received in the "base" year (1940). Quotas varied but from the middle of 1942 there was a reduction of 25 per cent which was further increased to 30 per cent in September 1943.

Beer and spirits had been cut by about one-third, as related above, and the output of Australian wine was pegged at the 1941 level. Later the supply of meat to butchers was curtailed under a quota system. It then became part of the art of living for the civilian in need of alcohol, tobacco or meat to attach himself or herself with ties of esteem and friendship to a publican or shopkeeper and try to get on his "list". The heavy smoker usually had a busy few days at the beginning of each month picking up a packet of cigarettes from a hairdresser, another from the newsagent's, a tin of the "makings" from under the counter at the greengrocer's, a little gift from some friend who had access to a military canteen, and two packets which his wife had got from an aunt who lived in another suburb, and so on. A place on a "list" and the retention of the shopkeeper's favour was usually obtained at the price of regular custom for other commodities. The housewives with their perambulators or "pushers" attended at the butcher's as early in the morning as they could get there and asked, "What can I have?" The reason for bringing the perambulator or the "pusher"[2] was not simply an airing for the children but to carry

[9] Full Cabinet Agendum 315, 25 Aug 1942.
[1] Statutory Rules, No. 83, 24 Feb 1942; amended by No. 399, 18 Sep.
[2] Later enterprising manufacturers produced mobile carriers (usually a bag on two small wheels and with a long handle after the principle of a porter's barrow) and these made their appearance in most suburbs.



"May I go now, sir? The tobacco queue is only a hundred yards long."

Rufus Morris in Bulletin *(Sydney) 26 Jan 1944*

home the day's shopping, for retail deliveries had been restricted. This restriction was admitted by authority to have caused considerable hardship, falling mostly on the housewife, but the saving in transport facilities, fuel and manpower was considerable, and it was much easier to stop a delivery cart from running than to put a racehorse out to grass.

Besides rationing, some goods disappeared altogether from the shops. The Australian handyman, accustomed to do odd jobs around the home or in the garden, had difficulty in obtaining the materials or the tools or even the nails and screws, either because they were "frozen" or because of local shortages. The housewife seeking to replace kitchen utensils might have to search far. Familiar articles of groceries, and in particular tinned goods, biscuits, and bacon disappeared.[3] In spite of the official efforts to ensure proper distribution of available supplies there were often local shortages. There were also favoured areas and many a saucepan or tea strainer from the shops of Broken Hill or tin of beans from Wollongong were carried as rare and precious booty to other parts of the continent. The railway traveller—and he had to obtain a priority to travel—might disclose with pride to his fellow passenger a half pound of bacon which he had bought in Melbourne and was taking back to Sydney, or a tin of shoe polish which he had found in Sydney and was taking back to Canberra. Knowing a "good grocer", or having a friend who was able to travel somewhere, or getting the tip that such and such a shop was going to get a new consignment of something became part of the zest of life on the civilian front. The overt hints from a shopman to "look in when you're passing" or "come back later", the triumph of obtaining a pair of shoe laces, became big events in suburban life.

To save manpower, materials and equipment, Production Executive had also carried out "rationalisation" in various industries. The customer could no longer choose his baker or milkman, for the delivery of bread and milk was organised in zones. The saving in Sydney and Melbourne by bread zoning was estimated to have released 1,214 men, 361 motor vehicles and 770 horse-drawn vehicles. The figures for the whole of Australia were about 1,500 men and 1,400 vehicles.

On 27th July controls for simplified clothing were announced under the style of "Fashions for Victory".[4] Men's suits must not have double-breasted fronts, vests, buttons or cuffs on the sleeves, cuffs on the trousers, or various other fancy additions. Mr Dedman had himself photographed wearing one to show how sensible and good-looking it was. It was not an attractive advertisement. What the men missed most was their waistcoats and eventually, after protests, the vest was added to the "Victory" suit in December 1942. The clothes officially designated "female apparel" were subject to fifteen prohibitions. Some prohibitions were absolute as for "evening wear, evening cloaks, evening wraps, bridge coats, dinner gowns,

[3] Manufacturers frequently sought to use the limited advertising available, not to persuade people to buy but merely to keep their name or brand before the public in places where the product was no longer available.

[4] Control of Clothing Orders for Male Outerwear, Feminine Outerwear, Knitted Underwear, Knitted Outerwear, Men's Half Hose, Women's, Maids' and Children's Hosiery, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 209, 31 Jul 1942.

hostess gowns and children's party frocks"; other prohibitions affected only dressmaking practice such as that against "fabrics reduced from normal width and/or length by all-over tucking, shirring and pleating, except in skirts when said fabric, after tucking, shirring or pleating operations shall not contain more material than permitted for sweeps as specified, and except for minor trimmings and tucking and shirring necessary for the shaping of a garment". The ideal was nothing fancy but nothing shapeless —austerity without being too severe. Dry-cleaners were prohibited from cleaning various classes of garments including dinner jackets and evening dresses.

From time to time throughout the year the prohibition or restriction of the manufacture of various goods, either throughout Australia or in particular parts where industrial capacity was needed, were introduced. Furniture, jewellery (except wedding rings), lawn mowers, fur coats and equipment for horse and dog racing were some early examples. The prohibition of the manufacture of a large number of cosmetics, including leg make-up, beauty masks, nail lacquers, bath salts, perfumes, eye cosmetics and brilliantines, was announced on 27th March.[5]

Restrictions were also placed on the use of materials in short supply. Building for civil purposes and the starting of new manufacturing enterprises were all brought under more rigid control. Travel between States was also restricted under a system of priorities, and permits were also required for long journeys within a State.[6]

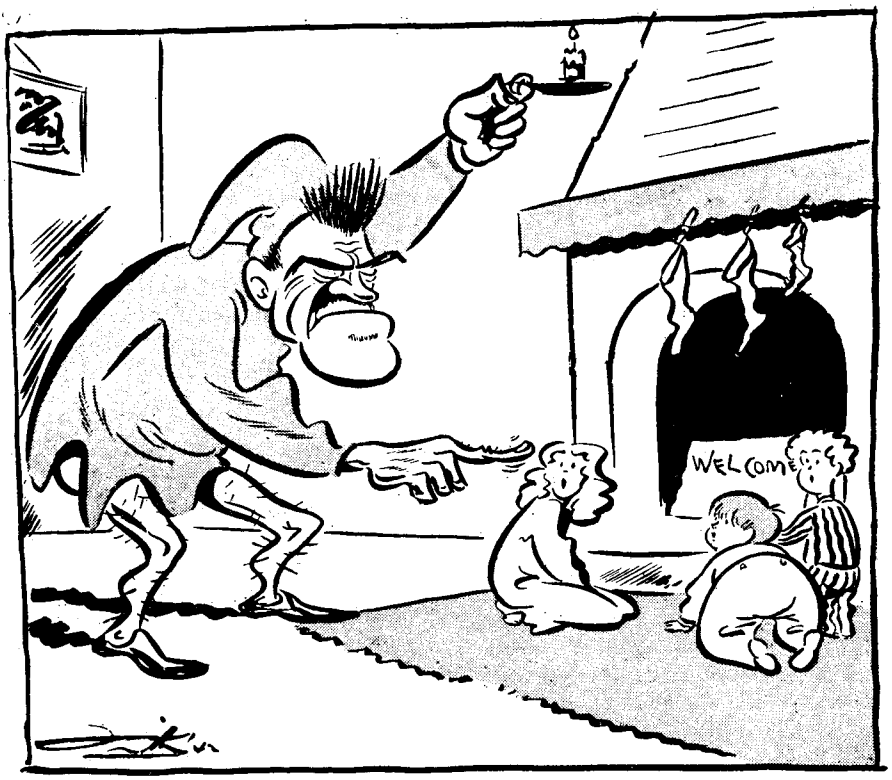
The rationalisation of the pastrycooking trade released from 300 to 400 men for other work. At the request of the Rationing Commission the use of icing was prohibited except for wedding and birthday cakes, for which only white icing should be used.

Advertising by newspaper or radio was restricted, the general principle being that "incitements" to spending should be avoided. As Christmas 1942 approached a special set of restrictions was placed on Christmas advertising. In any case the Prime Minister counselled the people not to indulge in wasteful spending but to give each other War Savings Certificates. The press, which had already been irritated by some of the activities of Production Executive, stretched this particular regulation into a story that Dedman was now trying to abolish Father Christmas.

Another action which precipitated angry criticism was a proposal to "rationalise" domestic servants and to draw away from private homes into other services of various kinds some of the 60,000 men and women who were estimated to be in domestic service in Australia, exclusive of those in hotels, boarding houses and institutions. The opposition spread into the War Cabinet where Evatt, as Attorney-General, challenged the validity of the proposed measure, arguing that being merely a disemployment order it did not come under the defence power. Behind the criticism, too, was the protest of the middle-income groups, particularly the householders

[5] Prohibition of Non-Essential Production Order No. 3, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 102, 2 Apr 1942.

[6] National Security (Land Transport) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 149, 26 Mar 1942. Restriction of Interstate Passenger Transport Order, 23 Jun 1942.



"Mr. Dedman Scrooge has banned Christmas advertising, the words 'Yuletide' and 'festive season' and the employment of Santa Claus in shops."

"It's nae use waitin' for Father-r-r Chr·i·istmas, ye ken. Ah've r-r-rationalised him."

Frith in Bulletin *(Sydney) 11 Nov 1942*

A cartoon representative of the savagery of many of the newspaper attacks on Dedman, as Minister for War Organisation of Industry.

with young families, who felt they had already suffered most of the inconvenience imposed by shortages and restrictions and would be the only ones to incur hardship by the new order. It was considerably modified and in its final form provided that after 17th January 1943 a person could not employ more than one domestic servant or retain more than one domestic servant without approval by the Manpower authority.[7]

The imposition of these various controls and restrictions had been opposed, but mostly by the interests directly affected in each case. Some of the criticism was more general and sprang not so much from any opposition to "austerity" as from a feeling that some of the regulations were serving no good purpose and that the administration was introducing controls just because it liked regimenting people's lives. There were also political allegations that, by means of these regulations, the Labour Party was making use of the war to put into effect its policy of socialism. Such opposition to the regulations was fostered by the press, which coined the term "Dedmanism" for what one paper called "the pettifogging and useless interferences of officialdom with the lives of the people". An article published in early December said:

> Every man and woman in Australia is eager to promote national efficiency. They fail to see how that efficiency is being helped by official ukases solemnly prohibiting pink icing, waistcoats, domestic servants and Santa Claus. . . . Every week new orders issue from Canberra which satisfy a bureaucratic craving for regulation but cannot by any stretch of the imagination have any material effect upon the conduct of the war.[8]

That comment was so greatly exaggerated as to amount to misrepresentation. It was probably true to say that there had been some unnecessary restrictions and that the so-called "swollen bureaucratic machine" was solemn, too big and too fond of control. The fact was, however, that most of the regulations and orders had saved manpower and materials for diversion to uses more directly connected with the war and that some proportion of the surplus spending power of the population had been turned back to the Treasury in the form of war loans or War Savings Certificates, instead of setting up competition for goods in short supply. As for the charge of socialism by stealth, the fact was that the "Economic Plan" had given to the Government far greater powers than even socialism sought, and those powers were used in the way that the Economic Plan required. If changes were being wrought which would last after the war was over, they were the result of the exigencies of war. Forces stronger than socialistic theory were at work; necessities greater even than Mr Dedman were shaping the course of life in Australia.

The constancy of this criticism and in some cases the unfairness of it led the Prime Minister to do his share of scolding the public. Curtin, closing his review of the first year's work of Production Executive, declared:

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[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 47, pp. 7-8; No. 49, pp. 3-8. Restriction of Employment of Domestic Servants Order, *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 335, 29 Dec 1942.

[8] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 Dec 1942.

> Those who refuse to accept with a good grace the necessary sacrifices of war are not true citizens of the Commonwealth; and I am convinced that there is no greater enemy in our midst than persons who try to spread the insidious doctrine that the necessity for sacrifice has passed, or who conceal their advocacy of this view among a welter of misrepresentation of the particular measures by which the sacrifices are enforced.[9]

In castigating his critics he had been less than just to the big majority. Again there were hundreds of thousands of citizens who accepted and abided scrupulously by controls. They purchased what their ration books allowed, they wore their Victory suits and their simplified shirts, they did not travel, they conserved the rubber tyres of their cars, they did exactly what they were told in respect of black-out curtains and air raid precautions, were careful never to divulge a shipping movement, grew their own vegetables, contributed scrap and papers to salvage, and listened in with emotion to the Prime Minister broadcasting and in the quietness of their homes resolved that they would do more. They had sons, or brothers, or husbands, or sweethearts sweating it out in the jungles of New Guinea or the prison camps of Malaya and Burma. Sometimes, having written letters to the soldier, some of them would write letters to the Prime Minister telling him that he was in their thoughts and prayers.

Quite apart from its relationship to the conduct of the war, the "season of austerity" marks a new phase in the development of Curtin as a war leader. The cares of office were already beginning to tell on him, but a sense of dedication and of the greatness of the role he had inherited had also lifted him. It was an unexpected place for him to be. He had started as a party politician with a strong party loyalty and a mind steeped in the rights of the working man. He was called now to be more than that, and to make decisions which would be greater than any he might have made on behalf of class and party, for they concerned the survival of the whole nation, they touched matters of life and death for men and women whose service as Australian citizens made their occupations or their politics of little importance. Curtin suffered in his own sensitive feelings every sign of slacking, every strike, every detraction from the war effort, bearing on himself the wounds that the offenders were too insensitive to feel. Practising austerity and dedicating himself wholly to the war effort he noticed at once any defection by others from this rigid code. It is part of the burden carried by a Prime Minister in wartime that he knows perhaps more accurately than anyone else the dangers that threaten and the weaknesses that might betray the nation. He sees more clearly the greatness of the effort needed for survival. He constantly has brought under his notice the difficulties that harass each one of his colleagues and receives almost hourly the urgent demands of those who know of weakness at only one point. Giving the utmost himself, demanding the utmost from others, he can seldom console himself with the greatness of the effort made but must always go to sleep and wake with the anxiety about what still remains to be done.

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[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 49, p. 11.

In the early months of 1943 the exhortations of the Prime Minister to his people sometimes take a scolding note and sometimes reveal the thought that unless he can force or persuade them they will fail and grow slack—that they must be whipped to duty. Sometimes, too, is heard a pleading note. Speaking in Parliament on the Third Liberty Loan at a time when it was only half-subscribed, he said:

> The slow progress of the Third Liberty Loan is an affront to our nationhood. It represents a triumph for selfishness and complacency over all our obligations as citizens of a country in deadly peril. Surely such a shocking response is no true reflection of Australian sentiment. There is no middle course. Either we face up to whatever sacrifices are demanded of us to ensure our safety or we endure much worse at the hands of a savage enemy.
>
> What has this nation been called on to bear so far? There are shortages of beer and cigarettes. Coupons are required for clothes and sugar and tea. But does the nation go hungry or unclad? Has one of our cities known Stalingrad's agony, or Coventry's ruin, or Rotterdam's mass murder from the air? . . . Is the civil population at home, suffering nothing, sacrificing little, to take refuge in all manner of excuses for failing to measure up to the standard of Australianism which our fighting men have set? . . . I beg the Australian people, many of whom today are idle when they could be working, and are dissipating resources which they ought to be husbanding, to bear in mind that what is being sought from them is being sought not only to preserve the freedom which they enjoy, but also so that their children in the years to come may be assured of the liberty which all of us have inherited and which we have a solemn trusteeship to preserve.[1]

[1] *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 174, pp. 2594-5.

CHAPTER 5

THE AUSTRALIAN CONTRIBUTION

1—MANPOWER DIFFICULTIES

EARLY in 1943 there were clear signs that the Australian war effort was in danger of getting out of hand. The anxieties and the energy of the Government had led the nation into more commitments than it could discharge. Ministers had worked hard at the sections of the war effort for which each was responsible. The Government's decisions on policy had reached farther and farther into the life of the nation and the machinery they had created had become more and more elaborate. Both policy decisions and machinery now began to produce new problems of their own.

Once again the crisis in the war effort took shape as a crisis in manpower.[1] In manpower administration the change of Government three months before the outbreak of war with Japan had unfortunately led to a hiatus. The members of the new Government had to learn by experience much that their predecessors had already started to learn. The Department of War Organisation of Industry, which had been created in June 1941, organised itself very slowly, largely because of the uncertainty, first under one Government and then under another, about what it should do or how it should work in relation to other departments. The manpower organisation which had been called into being by the Menzies Government in June 1941 was still imperfect when Japan struck.

The hiatus caused by the change of Government, however, would not have had serious effects but for the circumstances created by the quick succession of military disasters which followed the Japanese attack and brought hostile armies to the threshold of Australia. In a time of great danger, when no manpower policy had yet been formed nor adequate machinery for manpower administration had yet been created, men were put into the armed services and major diversions of manpower were made without a pause to consider in detail how this could best be done. For a period of two months after the Japanese attack more than 100,000 men were called up for full-time service and the only administrative screen which stood between the demands of the services and the supply of able-bodied men was a newly-amended *List of Reserved Occupations.*

Nevertheless the instrumentalities opportunely created under the Menzies Government in June 1941 had advanced far enough in their work on the manpower problem to be able to make early recommendations to the Government for a new type of control and for additional powers. On the recommendation of the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, and after a conference of State Ministers, a Manpower Directorate was established under the Minister for Labour and National Service and endowed with exceptional powers by the National Security (Manpower)

[1] See also *The Government and the People, 1939-1941* and S. J. Butlin, *War Economy, 1939-1942.*

Regulations of 29th January 1942.[2] The object of the regulations was to ensure that "the resources of manpower and woman-power in Australia shall be organised and applied in the best possible way to meet the requirements of the defence forces and the needs of industry in the production of munitions and the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community".[3] Power was given to the Director-General of Manpower to exempt any person from service in the armed forces; to declare that industries and undertakings were "protected" and hence to require that a permit be obtained for any change of employment. Later, during March, regulations were issued requiring all employers not conducting "protected" establishments to obtain all their labour through National Service offices, and all unemployed persons to register within seven days after becoming unemployed. From 1st April all engagement of male labour was controlled. In March, too, the nation-wide registration of all British subjects, both men and women, over the age of 16 years was completed.[4]

By these and similar measures the Government obtained extensive control over manpower. It had the power to say what every man should do whether in the armed services, war industry or civilian industry. It also established in the Manpower Directorate, with Mr W. C. Wurth as Director-General and with Deputy-Directors in all States, a nation-wide organisation for administering the controls. The change in the extent of control is indicated by the increases in the directorate's staff from 324 in February 1942 to 917 in March, 1,306 in June, 1,958 in December and 2,374 in June 1943, after which increases were more gradual.

Although by the middle of 1942 the Government had improved the machinery and procedures of manpower administration, there still remained the question of what was the best use to make of the available manpower. In the two preceding chapters some account has been given of the way the Curtin Government tried to reach a view on the conduct of the war. In Chapter 3, recounting the attempts of the Government to gain some influence on the higher direction of the war, we saw the building up of the armed services for the defence of the Australian mainland, both by recalling the divisions of the A.I.F. which were overseas and by mobilising more men and women at home. We also saw the strenuous efforts to obtain reinforcements and the weapons of war on land, sea and air, from the stronger Allies. We saw, too, the swing of argument from time to time between the need to resist invasion and the need to prepare Australia as a base for an offensive. Because this swing appeared at times to be a response to a turn for the better or the worse in the war news and at times seemed to suit the case that Australia was currently making, the question arose whether the Government had appreciated clearly and assessed accurately the situations, both military and political, in which it had to make decisions. In Chapter 4 we saw the attempts being made during the same

[2] Statutory Rules, No. 34, notified in *Commonwealth Gazette*, 31 Jan 1942.
[3] Paragraph 3 of the regulations.
[4] National Security (Manpower) Regulations, Statutory Rules, No. 113, 11 Mar 1942.

period to organise the nation for total war, including the handling of administrative, industrial and social problems, and the way in which the performance of that particular task produced its own demands.

Against that background we now have to examine the way in which, during the same period between April 1942 and the middle of 1943, the Government had to face a succession of particular problems on the use of manpower. In doing so they were required to face the fact that a Government had to say not only what Australia would like to do; not only what Australia was able to do; but, balancing profession and capacity, to decide what Australia would do in the war. The final testing of the conduct of the Australian war effort in this critical period comes with an examination of the way the Government handled their manpower problems.

The attention of Cabinet was first drawn to the matters of higher policy involved in manpower diversion in April 1942, during the brief lull in its fears which followed the arrival of MacArthur. Up to that point the fear of invasion had made the claims of the armed services paramount.

On 8th April the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, Mr Dedman, presented to the War Cabinet an estimate by the Director-General of Manpower that, on present commitments, at least 291,000 additional men and 24,000 additional women would be required for the fighting services, munitions, shipbuilding, aircraft production, and Allied Works. Most of the men would be required for the services: Army 162,820; R.A.A.F. 43,137; and Navy 2,700; total 208,657; and the next largest demand would be for Allied Works: 50,000. The changed conditions in recent months made it necessary to review Australian war commitments as a whole. What effect would the additions to the fighting forces have on the manpower required for essential industries? Could any of the munitions projects, such as bomber production or tank production, be abandoned or postponed now that supplies were coming more quickly from overseas? Could a stronger military force be obtained by leaving more men in industry and having somewhat fewer men with more equipment and munitions in the army?

At Dedman's prompting the War Cabinet appointed a Ministerial committee to review the manpower situation periodically and asked it to present its first report forthwith.[5]

After an examination of the problem by an inter-departmental committee, the Ministerial committee made a series of recommendations to the War Cabinet on 12th May. The committee said that the additional requirements of the armed forces, munitions, shipbuilding, aircraft production and the Allied Works Council, up to the end of 1942, were about 318,000 men and women and these could be met only by "a great increase in the employment of women on work previously regarded as the preserve of male labour", and by "a drastic reduction in the production of goods and services for the civilian population". The War Cabinet approved the committee's recommendations that there should not at present be any restriction in these plans for expansion of the forces and war industries

[5] War Cabinet Minute 2091, 9 Apr; Agendum 197/1942.

but that commitments should be kept constantly under review; that all export production should be reviewed; and that certain steps should be taken to ensure efficiency in the use of labour resources, the allocation of labour, and the drastic curtailment of unessential services.[6]

The inter-departmental committee presented a second report on 20th August 1942. It reported that in the three months to 30th June about 105,000 persons were provided towards meeting manpower requirements. The requirements for the remainder of 1942 had, however, been revised and the manpower requirements of the services and production departments (including private war contractors) and the Allied Works Council, to meet commitments in the second half of 1942, totalled about 183,000 persons (139,000 men and 44,000 women); and if the 139,000 men were obtained a further 36,000 women would be needed to replace men withdrawn from civil industry, bringing the total of women to 80,000. If more intensive hostilities depleted the army's pool of reinforcements the total requirements might reach 223,000 persons, for the estimates had been made on the assumption that the troops at present in Australia would not be engaged in large-scale hostilities such as resisting an invasion of Australia or taking part in an Allied offensive. These figures did not include any allowance for extra manpower needed for the production of essential supplies of food, clothing and suchlike for the civil populations of Australia, Britain or the Allies, or for the accretions of labour which would be required in rural industries at the seasonal peak.

During the first seven months of war in the Pacific—December 1941 to June 1942—the numbers engaged in civil production (excluding rural and domestic work) fell by about 140,000; war production had absorbed about 70,000 men and nearly 40,000 women; and 228,000 men and 12,000 women had been enlisted in the services.

After examining the possible sources of labour supply the committee reached the opinion that to meet the estimated requirements it would be necessary to take "a series of measures which in scope and severity transcend any hitherto contemplated". In particular, the reorganisation of industries by Production Executive would have to be carried through with "a ruthlessness and speed which may involve individual inequities and may arouse considerable opposition". It seemed doubtful, however, whether such measures could be carried far enough in the remaining months of 1942 to achieve the required diversion of manpower by the end of the year and, unless the measures recommended were pursued with the greatest energy and determination, the deficiency of manpower at the end of the year would be very serious.

The committee's recommendations included proposals for directing both male and female labour to transfer from one employment to another; calling up unoccupied persons, including women, for national service, rationalisation of industries; prohibition of non-essential production; reconstruction of distribution, commerce and finance, including wholesale and retail trade, banking and insurance and other service industries;

[6] War Cabinet Minute 2160, 26 May; Agendum 197/1942, Supplement No. 1.

diversion of labour from some rural industries to others, accompanied by restriction of Australian food consumption; increased dilution of skilled labour, the breaking down of skilled processes, the training of women for skilled processes and other changes to increase the training and improve the distribution of skilled labour within war industries; part-time work for women and special arrangements for women's employment and welfare in industry; longer hours of work through an increase in overtime.

The report continued:

> The Committee considers that, in view of the shortage of manpower, War Cabinet should undertake no new commitments involving the use of manpower without considering also which portions of its present programme are to be sacrificed to provide manpower for the new project. In order that such decisions may be based on adequate knowledge of the manpower position, the Committee considers that War Cabinet's decision that any new proposals involving manpower demands are to be referred to the Sub-Committee of Munitions before submission to War Cabinet, should be strictly observed. The Committee also urges that a similar procedure should be followed in connection with projects which will make substantially increased demands for manpower but which are not submitted to War Cabinet. Details of the proposals in the early planning stages should be submitted to the Ministerial Sub-Committee through the Minister for War Organisation of Industry. This recommendation is made subject to a reservation that Allied Works projects are to be submitted for purposes of information only.

Finally the committee recommended a further investigation on the following matters:

(i) The possibility of a lack of correspondence between personnel and equipment in the services and any strategic consequences involved.
(ii) The measures necessary to ensure the balanced progress of war production, in the event of a differential incidence of shortages of all kinds in the various items of the programme.
(iii) The possibility of correcting any lack of balance or shortage in equipment supplies by shipments from overseas.
(iv) The advisability of curtailing or eliminating any production projects to permit of concentration on the remainder.
(v) The advisability of a substantial release of men from the services to accelerate the flow of munitions and aircraft.
(vi) The plans to be made with respect to the army's contingent requirements of 40,000 reinforcements.

It was suggested that the committee to make this further inquiry should be composed of the Commander-in-Chief or his representative; the Director-General of Munitions and of Aircraft Production; the Director-General of Manpower; the Director of War Organisation of Industry; and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Allied Supply Council. Representatives of the other services would be co-opted as required.[7]

The proposals were considered by the War Cabinet on 31st August and it was decided to submit them to the Full Cabinet after amending them to provide full membership of the navy and air force on the proposed committee and enjoining the closest collaboration between such a committee and the Allied Supply Council, the Services Munitions Coordinating Committee, the Defence Committee and the service boards.

[7] War Cabinet Agendum 197/1942, Supplement 3.

On 8th September 1942, after a general discussion on manpower, the Full Cabinet decided to convene a conference of the Australian Labour Party to discuss the question. This was not held and on 22nd September the Full Cabinet adopted the recommendations of the inter-departmental committee with the reservation that it would not be possible to realise the estimated manpower requirements fully by the end of 1942.[8] It was proposed that "the tempo of the plan should be accelerated in the light of circumstances with a view to obtaining the numbers as soon as possible".[9] The decisions were endorsed in due course by the Advisory War Council on 15th October.[1]

In its decision of 22nd September 1942 the Full Cabinet also directed that a special War Commitments Committee should review the implications of the probable delay in fulfilling the manpower requirements for the 1942 programme. This committee, consisting of the Prime Minister, the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, the three Chiefs of Staff, the Directors-General of War Organisation of Industry, Allied Works, Manpower, and Munitions and Aircraft Production and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Allied Supply Council, met for the first time on 6th January 1943. The position they found was that at the end of 1942 the Army, Navy, Air Force, Munitions and Aircraft Production and Allied Works Council had not been able to obtain 79,000 men and 42,000 women out of the totals they had wanted to obtain. To fulfil the programmes to which they were committed in the first half of 1943 they would require 67,000 men and 22,000 women. This made a total requirement up to June 1943 of 146,000 men and 64,000 women.

It was pointed out that rural industries could not be expected to make any set contribution to war requirements of manpower in other fields; that civil factory production had already contributed more than two-thirds of its pre-war labour force and could not be relied upon to release more than a few thousand persons over the whole period; that there was no appreciable reserve of unemployed labour, and that only very small numbers of persons "not gainfully occupied" remained to be drawn into useful work (at least if it were assumed that married women could not be called up for national service). As a result the only important reservoir of divertible labour still remaining was that of the "white collar" industries, and in those industries a high proportion of the labour now engaged was physically unsuited for use in the services or war factories. Moreover many fields of "white collar" employment were difficult to tap because the firms were engaged on commercial activities essential to the maintenance of the economic system and the distribution of war and essential supplies, and because of this and the complexity of the commercial system it was not possible to obtain manpower by the simple method of eliminating "non-essential" production as had been done in manufacturing indus-

[8] The next ALP conference was in Melbourne from 17th to 19th November 1942 and was chiefly concerned with the proposed reference of powers to the Commonwealth and the wider use of the militia. The allocation of manpower was not discussed.

[9] Full Cabinet Agendum 327.

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 1090, 15 Oct 1942, on Agendum 46/1942, 30 Sep.



Australian War Memorial

A Commonwealth War Loan poster, issued on 25th June 1943, on the sinking of the hospital ship *Centaur*. The *Centaur* had been sunk off the Queensland coast by a Japanese submarine on 14th May 1943.



Australian War Memorial

One of the many War Loan posters issued on 16th March 1944 announcing a new Victory Loan.



Australian War Memorial

Harvesting a bean crop in the Leeton district of New South Wales. These young women were members of the Australian Women's Land Army which was established in July 1942 under the Director-General of Manpower. Women did notable work in the growing of fruit, vegetables and cotton, in dairying and in poultry farming.



Australian War Memorial

Packing bananas on a plantation in northern New South Wales.



Australian War Memorial

Women helping with the harvesting of a maize crop in the Armidale district of New South Wales in 1943.



Australian War Memorial

A group of Brisbane housewives delivering ice in the Kedron district in 1944.



Australian War Memorial

A stage in the processing of dehydrated potatoes at the Ulverstone dehydration plant in Tasmania. In 1944 when the United States forces took the offensive against Japan the Australian Army found itself cast in a less active role. Australia's contribution to the eventual victory thenceforward became more and more that of producer and provider for the major ally. By the end of 1944, for example, she had supplied American forces in the Pacific with some 2,000 million pounds of high-grade food, covering 300 commodities valued at £171,000,000.



Australian War Memorial

Stacking tins of canned food in a factory as they came from the cookers.

tries. Among the "white collar" industries, retail trade offered the most promising opportunities for diversion. Another factor was that only a small fraction of the men obtainable in the future would be suitable by age and physical condition for direct recruitment into the services since very few men in military classes I, II and III now remained outside the essential activities covered by the lists of protected undertakings and reserved occupations. This meant that the recruitment of men for the services would have to come chiefly from men engaged in war industries and other essential industries, and they would have to be replaced in industry so far as possible by whatever men were obtainable from elsewhere. But if the full demands of the services were met in this manner the labour force engaged in munitions and aircraft production would fall by some thousands of persons each month. Summarised, the position was that the services wanted manpower at the rate of 16,000 men and 6,000 women a month; and munitions and aircraft wanted a supply of 8,000 men and 5,000 women a month. Against this total monthly demand for 24,000 men and 11,000 women the estimated supply would be not more than 5,000 men and 5,000 women.

It was plain that there would have to be an adjustment—not simply the old adjustment between the claims of essential industry, the services and war industry on the one hand and all other activities on the other hand, but an adjustment between the services and the essential and war industries.

The special War Commitments Committee recommended:

(i) That the Defence Committee should immediately review present plans for the expansion of the services and of war production, having regard to the availability of manpower for carrying out the programme.

(ii) That a Manpower Commission should be established by Act of Parliament, the Commission to comprise three to five members (including a member who would act as liaison officer with the Defence Committee), and to be equipped with full statutory powers to procure and direct the transfer of labour into appropriate channels in accordance with Government policy, and to coordinate with the activities of authorities now clothed with powers of call-up and direction of manpower.[2]

The recommendation to create a Manpower Commission by statute went to the Full Cabinet on 13th January 1943—but nine days later a further submission admitted that "no progress on the lines of a Manpower Commission" had been made, and so another approach was attempted. This was that the War Commitments Committee should advise the War Cabinet on the numbers to be allocated to direct war activities, and report each month on the progress attained; that the manpower regulations be amended to give the Director-General power to direct labour; that the *Defence Act* be amended to permit the compulsory call-up of women for all the women's auxiliary services (the Minister for Labour disagreed with this); that the Allied Works Regulations and the Manpower Regulations be amended so as to make the call-up for the Allied Works Council subject to the same degree of control by the Manpower Directorate as was already exercised

[2] Copy of report attached to War Cabinet Agendum 197/1942, Supplement 4.

with respect to the army call-up; that the Production Executive be renamed the Economic Cabinet and all plans for allocation of substantial quantities of labour for industrial purposes be referred to it in the first place.

The Full Cabinet endorsed the recommendations with the exception of the last. Amendment of the Manpower Regulations giving the vital power of direction to the Director-General followed immediately.[3] Diplomatic and consular representatives and members of the fighting services and of the women's auxiliary services and internees were exempted.[4] Henceforward the War Commitments Committee provided the opportunity for opposing claimants for manpower to state their case.[5]

So when the matter went to the War Cabinet on the 30th Dedman did not ask for acceptance of the recommendation for a Manpower Commission but proposed "that the War Cabinet direct Production Executive to carry through as quickly as possible the restrictive measures which are necessary in order to reduce the gap between supplies and requirements of manpower for the services and war production". This was "approved in principle" by the War Cabinet subject to a direction that the Minister for War Organisation of Industry should consult the Prime Minister regarding those proposals which should be submitted to the Full Cabinet.

The meaning of this decision was that the War Cabinet regarded the control of manpower as essentially a political question and not one that could be dealt with mechanically, administratively or perhaps even consistently.[6] In this the War Cabinet was more realistic than the public servants who might have preferred a more mechanical and less unpredictable course. The politicians remembered, however, what the bureaucrats sometimes forgot. Manpower control is the control of human beings, most of whom, in addition to their idiosyncrasies, have the common character of being electors, consumers and agents in production. They cannot be handled or made the subject of calculation in the same way as stockpiles of rubber or reserves of iron ore. In fact, all manpower questions could only be approached through a hedge of political opinion. Trade unions careful of their industrial conditions; farmers demanding rural labour and machinery and a market for their product; traders and manufacturers concerned with the welfare of their industry as part of the welfare of

[3] Statutory Rules, No. 23, 29 Jan 1943. Direction of unemployed was covered in the original Manpower Regulations; a more comprehensive power was considered but discarded—partly because it was felt that "a considerably higher degree of manpower mobilisation could be achieved before it became vital to exercise the instrument of direction". The need for this power of direction underlined the inefficiency of Rule 77; according to the Director-General of Manpower "a delegation of powers under Rule 77 would not meet the position in view of the difficulties that have already become apparent in endeavouring to use the powers conferred under this Rule". (Letter to Department of War Organisation of Industry, 22 Oct 1942.) The report of the Committee (War Cabinet Agendum 197/1942, Supplement 3, and War Cabinet Minute 2327) urged the need to give powers of direction.

[4] The amendment to the *Defence Act* to enable call-up to the women's services was not made. The Manpower Directorate was more concerned about the numbers going into the services from vital industry, and their method had been to institute a Schedule of Restrictions on 7th August 1942 to try and check this movement. (W. C. Wurth, *Control of Manpower in Australia, February 1942-September 1944*, p. 63.) The Allied Works Council continued to avoid direct control by the Manpower Directorate and except for a minor amendment (Statutory Rules, No. 77, 27 Mar 1942) this part of the Cabinet directive was not carried out. The feud between the Allied Works Council and the Manpower Directorate was rarely more intense than at the end of 1942.

[5] In the opinion of the Director-General of Allied Works the Committee could not take the place of the Manpower Commission which had been recommended.

[6] War Cabinet Agendum 197/1942, Supplement 4, 22 Jan 1943, and War Cabinet Minute 2616, 30 Jan 1943.

the nation; soldiers spelling out patriotism in the bold and simple characters of warfare—all had their firm and legitimate points of view. In handling manpower the Government had critics in its own ranks, critics in the Opposition, and critics in the populace, and was faced with rival claims which could not be settled by arithmetic but only by political calculations.

At this stage, approaching a turning point in manpower policy, it is necessary to consider broadly the changed situation in which the Government had to make its decisions during 1943. The improvement in the military outlook and the receding of the menace from Australian shores have already been mentioned. This change in the fortunes of war would appear, however, to have made possible a reconsideration of manpower policy rather than to have been a cause of that reconsideration. There is no evidence that the Australian Government changed their allocations of manpower because danger was passing and all the evidence is that they changed the allocations because of changes in the demand. The most intensive use of the total manpower of the nation was not made in 1942 when the military danger was greatest, for the call then was a highly specialised one for fighting men, but in 1943 when the total demands had multiplied and spread into more phases of the war effort.

Another considerable factor was the growth of Allied strength, based on Australia. That growth both lessened the demand for Australian forces and created new demands for other uses of Australian manpower.

Throughout 1943 the consideration of manpower questions by the Australian Government was complicated by the increasing requests made to Australia for reciprocal Lend-Lease supplies for the American forces in Australia or in the South Pacific. At the same time other demands were being made on Australia outside the mutual aid system. Increased activity in the South Pacific Area led to increased claims from New Zealand, Fiji, New Caledonia and the Pacific Islands, some governmental and some by private traders, for Australia and New Zealand were the only major food producers and Australia the only major manufacturer from which items such as foodstuffs, footwear, clothing, rope, soap, tools, blankets and many other miscellaneous items might be obtained.

Thus demands were being pressed on Australia because of the increased military activity by both Australian and American services in Australian territory, the increased activity in the South Pacific Area, and by the needs of the whole southern Pacific, in which area Australia was the only manufacturer and, with New Zealand, the only major food producer. The effects of the demand were heightened somewhat in the early part of 1943 by the assiduity with which all services, American and Australian, were building up huge strategic reserves of non-perishable foodstuffs above their current requirements. Between them they were trying to acquire three months' reserves for nearly 1,000,000 troops, including air force, in the South-West Pacific Area, and a year's reserves for 200,000 troops in the South Pacific Area. For the sake of the Pacific, Australia ceased to eat rice; for the sake of American soldiers, it almost forgot the taste

of pork; but the true heart of the matter was not that Australians did without rice and pork themselves but that they had to keep manpower engaged in producing them for the sake of the common war effort.

It took a little time for Australian departments, looking severally at separate aspects of the question, to adjust themselves to the idea that all this meant another claim on resources and, in particular, on manpower, and it took a little time, too, for the public and members of Parliament to adjust themselves to the notion that a land of plenty might have shortages and that people still producing food might have to go without it themselves.

By the end of April 1943, however, the Department of Supply was on the way to setting up the machinery for the coordination of arrangements for dealing with Pacific supply questions and for relating demands more expeditiously to capacity, and the Treasury, too, was thinking less of bookkeeping and the Budget and more of the handling of increasing demands for reciprocal aid in direct relationship to the Australian production programme. A report on reciprocal Lend-Lease administration to 30th April 1943, submitted to the War Cabinet by the Treasurer on 8th June 1943,[7] placed the position squarely before the Government:

> It is clear that supply and service to the United States Forces will fully tax Australian capacity.
>
> Reciprocal Lend-Lease assistance can be expected to increase in direct ratio to the numbers of United States troops who are in or based on Australia. The extent of any such increase will be determined by war operational planning but there seems to be little doubt that the number of United States troops who will be serviced from this area will increase as the war against Japan progresses.
>
> There are inherent difficulties resulting from limitation of industrial set-up, supply to Australian armed forces and population deficiencies which place a definite limit on our capacity to continue service to an expanding force.
>
> To date we have met reciprocal aid by placing an added strain on industry, and to some extent by diversion of goods from civil consumption. The manpower position, however, compels an over-all consideration of our capacity to meet further expansion. Broadly speaking, the position seems to be that if we are to continue and expand service and supply to an increasing American force it can only be done effectively either—
>
> (*a*) by the United States accepting responsibility for manning some of the facilities which are being created, e.g., engine repair workshops, shipbuilding and repair yards, etc., or
>
> (*b*) by a reduction in the Australian forces and diversion of this manpower to production for the remaining Australian forces plus the United States forces.
>
> The position needs a combination of planning and approach which will give the greatest use of our facilities towards the defeat of our enemies. We must ensure, however, that the ultimate manning of projects is clearly envisaged and properly planned before we put them on the construction schedule.

At this time, too, the production and processing of foodstuffs took on a new importance. Resulting from the work of the Food Executive, in association with the Manpower Directorate, on urgent food production problems, the War Cabinet was eventually induced during the course of

[7] War Cabinet Agendum 94/1943, Supplement 1, 8 Jun 1943; and War Cabinet Minute 2911, 17 Jun.

1943 to issue a general direction that "for all purposes of priority the production of essential foods is to be regarded as a war activity"[8] and to classify the manufacture of agricultural machinery and food processing plant as a munitions project. Before the end of 1942 rural industries had ceased to be a source of supply of manpower to the services; before the end of 1943, as a consequence of the new priority, they became a claimant for manpower. Before the end of 1943 the release from the services for rural industries had been approved and one of the major calls on the conscripted labour of women was made by the canning factories.[9] Thus, new demands, pressing on the heels of the decisions already made by the Government, forced a reconsideration of the role of Australian armed forces in the war, and eventually led to a reduction in the Order of Battle of the Australian Military Forces. The claims of the services against the claims of industry brought the sharpest conflicts in the whole struggle to obtain manpower. When there was fear of invasion and few Allied troops in Australia the services had pride of place; now that there was no danger of invasion and many allies, the services found that they had to struggle for recruits, then, for lack of recruits they had to reduce their establishments, and, finally, they had to discharge soldiers for the sake of industry.

The turning point appears to have come about the commencement of 1943. In September 1942 Curtin had still been publicly resisting the release of men from the army. "In the absence of naval and aerial superiority in this theatre," he said, "I am not prepared to risk any contraction of the army from the strength which our advisers consider to be the minimum required for the task confronting them; and the present strength of the Australian Army is not so great as I consider necessary."[1]

The decisions made on the recommendation of the special War Commitments Committee at the end of January 1943 were discussed with Blamey by Curtin on 12th February, and on this occasion the Prime Minister explained to Blamey that "as Australia's commitments have now reached the maximum of her manpower, material and financial resources, it is very important that there should be a review of commitments to ensure that the best possible use is being made of these resources". The Commander-in-Chief was told that the means by which it was sought to achieve this were:

(i) The review of the material programmes of the services, which is at present before the Defence Committee.
(ii) The review of the allocation of manpower resources by the War Commitments Committee.
(iii) The tightening of the control of expenditure with a view to ensuring the highest degree of soundness in proposals authorised, with the greatest possible avoidance of wasteful expenditure. The cooperation of the American authorities in Australia is also to be sought in the observance of these principles.[2]

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 61, p. 9.
[9] War Cabinet Minute 2972, 13 Jul 1943 on Agendum 226/1943, 10 Jul; and War Cabinet Minute 3065, 1 Oct 1943.
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 112.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 2649, 15 Feb 1943.

Already the army did not have enough men to maintain its approved establishment. An incidental factor affecting the claims of the army was the high wastage of troops in New Guinea from malaria and other tropical diseases mentioned earlier. On 23rd March the War Cabinet had before it a series of reports, collated for it by the Defence Committee, showing the effect of the wastage of men by disease on the Australian capacity to maintain the strength and organisation of the forces. The conclusion to which the reports pointed was that if Australia wished to maintain a striking force of 95,000 for offensive operations it would probably have to eliminate two or three formations from the Order of Battle. The actual position was that there was already a deficiency of 79,000 on the war establishment, the monthly intake of men was only expected to be half of the 12,500 required, and, in addition, special provision would have to be made to replace cases of temporary sickness in the striking force who were not evacuated to base. No portion of the force should be committed to continuous action under conditions of hardship for more than three months. The War Cabinet decided to seek Blamey's views regarding the reorganisation of the Australian Military Forces with special reference to the strength for New Guinea.[3]

Besides its reconsideration of the Australian armed forces, War Cabinet also viewed with concern the continued surplus production of weapons and ammunition being assigned overseas, and on 23rd March drew attention to the implications of such assignments in terms of manpower and the diversion of productive capacity to other urgent needs; especially "in view of the strong representations made . . . on the manpower deficiencies of the services and munitions production. . . ." Referring to "repeated directions over a prolonged period" the War Cabinet indicated that in the light of the War Commitments Committee's report in January on manpower, and of the possible reduction of the forces,

> the main initiative rests with the Defence Committee and the service departments in determining the minimum requirements of the manpower and production capacity for the material and personnel objectives of their main programmes.

Reviews and re-assessment of the programmes must be completed without further delay; and the London Munitions Assignment Board was to be informed so that they might be aware that reservations existed in regard to the "nature and extent of assignments that can be made for overseas orders".[4]

After a comprehensive review into various phases of the production of munitions and war materials, either for the Australian services or for assignment overseas, the Defence Committee reported to the War Cabinet on 14th April 1943, when certain curtailments of the munitions production programme were agreed to, and the Committee's reports as a whole were referred for further study by the War Commitments Committee and General MacArthur.[5] The purpose of the review was to release manpower from the munitions industry to the greatest extent practicable.

[3] War Cabinet Minute 2715, 23 Mar; War Cabinet Agendum 106/1943, 13 Mar.
[4] War Cabinet Minute 2714, 23 Mar 1943.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 2771, 14 Apr; Agenda 140/1943, 167/1943, 169/1943 and 178/1943.

A month later the War Commitments Committee was confirmed in its function of reviewing the commitments in relation to manpower capacity and making recommendations to the Minister for Defence.[6] The procedure was also laid down that any submission from a Minister involving further expansion of any of the services or any additional munitions or aircraft production projects or Allied Works Council projects should be accomplished from manpower already available.[7]

The report on the reorganisation of the Australian Military Forces which was presented by Blamey in response to the War Cabinet decision of 23rd March 1943 tried to reconcile the need for reducing the Order of Battle (in view of recent experience under tropical conditions, the high wastage rate and the low intake of manpower into the army) with the need to prepare a force of three infantry divisions for offensive operations in the South-West Pacific Area while maintaining a force sufficient to defend Australia and provide a reserve. The minimum force required was assessed at the equivalent of nine infantry divisions, two armoured divisions, one armoured brigade and one army tank brigade with proportionate non-divisional, base and lines of communication units. Of these, three infantry divisions, with ancillary units, were required for New Guinea.

Blamey thought it was now "a justifiable and indeed an unavoidable risk" to reduce the forces on the Australian mainland in view of the altered strategic situation since the submission of his previous appreciation in September 1942 when Japanese naval and army units were concentrated in great strength in the South-West Pacific, and the position was one of extreme gravity. Since then the recent successful campaigns in the Solomons and New Guinea areas and the effectiveness of air attacks on Japanese invasion convoys had improved the position considerably by forcing the enemy front farther to the north and seizing the initiative. The danger of invasion, however, had not been wholly removed.

In the course of reorganisation Blamey had disbanded a motorised division and some ancillary units, reduced lines of communications units and replaced about 4,000 men of the A.M.F. by the Volunteer Defence Corps in anti-aircraft and coast artillery.

The reorganisation, however, would not effect a reduction of more than 20,000 men and, in future, either the intake would have to be increased or further field formations would have to be disbanded. He expressed the view that:

(*a*) Further releases of manpower from industry should be sought to make up any deficiency which exists in the numbers required for the reduced Order of Battle, reinforcement pool, and adequate reinforcements for the force on recommencement of operations.

(*b*) If the releases from manpower to the extent required cannot be made and it becomes necessary to disband further field formations, then the force being prepared for offensive operations should be reduced by one infantry division (with ancillary units) for the reason that the Australian

[6] War Cabinet Minute 2843, 14 May 1943.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 2844, 14 May 1943.

> New Guinea and mainland defensive component has been reduced to the barest minimum.[8]

In reality, this submission by Blamey required the War Cabinet to face the question whether or not it wished to reduce its share in any offensive against Japan and to enlarge Australia's role as a base for operations and a supplier of goods and services. The War Cabinet referred the manpower aspects of Blamey's submission to the Defence Committee for review in the light of the advice from the War Commitments Committee[9] that 10,000 persons a month was the maximum available for the services and munitions and aircraft production. Curtin, as Minister for Defence, was asked to take up with MacArthur the question whether the force being prepared for offensive operations should be reduced by one division, discussing it in relation to the prospective strength of United States forces in the South-West Pacific Area.[1]

Thus, in the first half of 1943 the Australian Government was again faced with the necessity of making a major decision on the nature of the Australian war effort. The problem came up to them as one of a shortage of manpower mingled with numerous other considerations, such as fears for Australian security, the importance of munitions and aircraft, attempts to obtain reinforcements and supplies from Britain and America, differences in view regarding the grand strategy which tended to make them see the war as an assertion of the claims of the Pacific over the claims of Europe, obligations to furnish reciprocal aid, increasing demands for Australian supplies, transport difficulties, a rather blurred demand for "taking the offensive against Japan", considerations relating to Australian industry and primary production and the post-war economy of the country, pride in the record of the Australian services. These were only some of the questions that swirled round the Cabinet table.

The War Cabinet usually sent the manpower question back to their officials with directions to examine the "best possible use" of resources, to re-examine their programmes, and to tighten controls. The problem was returned to them very much in the shape of an argument between various authorities and interests as to who should have the most human bodies. The political question became one of allocation. This meant restriction of some activities, curtailment of services and renewed raking through the oft-raked heap to try to discover more manpower. Yet never does it appear to have led to the attempt at a synthesis. Gradually and of necessity, and through the course of successive and sometimes conflicting decisions on various minor questions, the nature of the Australian war effort began to change, but at no time does it appear that at the highest level the over-all question was considered: in the present situation and having regard to our present resources and obligations what can Australia best do to help win the war? There is no sign of a single mind rising above the detail to consider the whole problem. The material

[8] War Cabinet Agendum 160/1943, Supplement 1, 13 Apr 1943.
[9] War Cabinet Agendum 197/1942.
[1] War Cabinet Minute 2810, 30 Apr 1943.

before the War Cabinet at this stage bears the signs of diversity of origin and there is confusion of counsel. The successive decisions of the War Cabinet were neither comprehensive nor constant. They answered a number of little questions as they arose and never faced the big question. They revealed no over-all view.

Munitions were expanded and new aircraft production ventures undertaken; new supply commitments were accepted; an offensive role for the services was reasserted; claims for supplies from abroad were pressed.

The situation has been described by the Director-General of Manpower, Mr Wurth:

> . . . the fact remains that the services and industrial interests represented two sources of competing demands for manpower, between which it was extremely difficult to mediate. A solution of the difficulty was the more elusive because it continually presented itself in terms of particular issues, or even small groups of men, rather than as a single integral problem of policy. What was required was some universal scheme of apportionment of manpower, into which all the decisions and particular issues could be fitted. . . . The three claimants—services, war industry and civilian industry —spoke with different voices. Moreover the pressure which each interest could maintain to procure manpower was by no means uniformly proportionate to the strength of its claim. The tendency was for each claimant to endeavour to achieve its own manpower objective as rapidly and as completely as possible.[2]

In writing thus the Director-General had in mind chiefly the problems of control which his own administration had to overcome. In elaborating these problems he pointed also to changes in Government plans consequent on changes in the war situation, the impossibility of forecasting those changes, and the difficulties of determining the quantities of essential civilian consumption. He naturally saw the problem as one of "integrating the demand for manpower, adjusting total demands to the total available supply, having regard to the maintenance of prescribed civilian standards, and disposing it between the various claimants to achieve the maximum benefit to the war effort". The political historian, writing after the event, however, finds as the central feature of the whole manpower situation a constant uncertainty in the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet regarding the exact nature of the Australian war effort. The adjustment of conflicting claims was attended with a large measure of administrative efficiency. The reason why there were so many conflicting claims, persisting over so long a period of time, was due to the absence of clear, firm, exact and prompt determinations on policy by those responsible for the higher direction of the war in Australia. It was the old problem of deciding the nature and extent of the Australian war effort, of shaping and imposing on the nation a conscious purpose in the conduct of the war.

Because this political hesitation and uncertainty continued so long and throughout a period when danger had shown the need and challenged the will of the nation, the question arises whether a government, in any circumstances, can claim to be master of its policy, or whether, in spite of the most determined resolve to lead the nation, its actions are shaped by the force of events. Whatever may have been in the mind of Curtin or

[2] *Control of Manpower in Australia, February 1942-September 1944*, pp. 12-14.

his colleagues, the nature of the Australian war effort would appear to have been shaped less by their will than by the changing circumstances of war. Their policy was a response to, an acceptance of and an adjustment to meet a series of events, and what is to be praised or criticised is very largely the degree of promptness with which the response was made and the exactness and efficiency with which the adjustment was planned. The only conclusion which is justified by the political study of the manpower administration in 1942 and 1943 is that Australia found herself in a new role not because Curtin or anyone else had planned it that way, but because of Curtin's acceptance of events. The course of the war and the pressure of affairs were determining what Australia would do.

The quality not only of the man but of leadership itself are under question. There will be those, either unfriendly to Curtin or fixed in their own views of the military role of Australia, who will say that he should have acted more boldly and more ruthlessly to conscript, to maintain the fighting role of Australia, to reduce civilian demands and to refuse excessive commitments to supply the forces and the civilians of other lands. There will be those, friendly to him, and firm in their pride in the statistics of the Australian war effort, who, being satisfied with the result, will give the Government full credit for achieving it. A closer study of the processes by which the nature of the Australian war effort was shaped, however, leaves some doubt about the capacity of any government—in the circumstances of the Australian Government of 1942 and 1943—to withstand the pressure of events and accords to political leadership the quality of recognising and estimating the course of events and manipulating and organising the consequences of those events rather than the heroic and legendary quality of shaping the course of history. Certainly there are no signs that in this final crisis of the war the Australian Government shaped history or were masters of Australia's fate although they can be accorded the merit of working assiduously, though not always with quickness of perception, to organise the war effort called forth by changing circumstances. There is little sign that the War Cabinet ever saw clearly that a decision of higher policy on the nature of the Australian war effort, assuming it were possible for them to make it, would have cleared the way to prompter and more direct decisions on the use of manpower. Rather the situation appears to have been that, in moving from one decision to another on particular problems of manpower, they helped to bring about a situation in which their freedom to make any decision on the higher direction of the Australian war effort was narrowly limited.

2—THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE WAR EFFORT, JULY-OCTOBER 1943

By the beginning of July 1943 the need for readjustment of the Australian war effort in the light of changed conditions had been realised. At a meeting on 13th July 1943 the War Cabinet accepted a statement presented by Curtin as Minister for Defence, reviewing the war effort

and setting out the principles which should govern what Australia did in future.[3]

The statement commenced by pointing out that the danger of invasion had decreased (it did not admit even yet that it had disappeared); Australian defences had been strengthened and aid had come from abroad because command of the sea had been held. Thus the broad strategical situation which governed the nature and scope of the nation's war effort had changed and the war effort was due for review.

Such a review, the statement continued, would afford an opportunity

> to reconsider the position of those classes of production which had been unduly depressed because of the paramount urgency of other demands, which have either been fulfilled, or which, on a balanced view of the war effort, may have been over-provided for. The need for this re-examination is particularly pressing in the case of those industries which are required to make a greater contribution to the war effort in the South-West Pacific Area, or which represent a specialised aspect of the Australian economy in which Australia is peculiarly fitted to make a contribution to the war effort of the United Nations, as in the case of foodstuffs. The assurance of Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt about the Pacific theatre should guarantee assistance in those things for which our capacity is insufficient, without the need for placing our national structure under undue strain to produce them. It is also necessary to bear in mind the request for the coordination of our production programme with that of the United Kingdom and the United States so that each of us may undertake the things which we are most capable of doing, that we may help each other with our surpluses and also avoid duplication of our respective efforts.

The guiding principles adopted by the War Cabinet were generally designed to keep the war effort within the Commonwealth's physical capacity, to make the primary consideration the raising of forces and the provision of supplies and services for the South-West Pacific Area, to call a halt to new and ambitious projects of doubtful or only short-term value, and to divert manpower from the production of surpluses to the production of items in short supply. These principles were to be served by a stricter insistence on the endorsement of undertakings by the War Cabinet, Production Executive, the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Supply Council, War Commitments Committee and the Food Executive, each operating in its own sphere.[4]

As regards the services, the navy was to be maintained at existing strength; the army would provide three infantry divisions for offensive operations and "adequate forces for defence of Australia and New Guinea and for relief of units in New Guinea". The air force would be maintained "at the strength authorised under the 72-squadron programme to the extent to which aircraft can be provided". In general the strength of the forces was to be governed by "the available manpower, the capacity to maintain wastage and the coordination of manpower required for other needs", and, in practice, the meaning of those terms was to be worked out by

[3] War Cabinet Agendum 311/1943 and War Cabinet Minute 2968, 13 Jul. The substance of the introductory part of this statement was later reproduced in paragraphs 13 to 20 of the Governor-General's speech to Parliament on 23 Sep 1943. (*Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, pp. 9-10.)

[4] See also S. J. Butlin, *War Economy, 1939-1942* and D. P. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry*.

the Defence Committee and War Commitments Committee, with reference also to the Commander-in-Chief.

The War Commitments Committee was also to review the manpower requirements of works programmes and essential services such as transportation, water, power and lighting.

At the same meeting the War Cabinet had before it an agendum entitled "Review of Personnel Programmes of the Services—Allocation of Manpower Resources Between the Services and War Production Departments", dated 28th June. This paper was based on the work done by the Defence Committee, in conformity with War Cabinet's request of 30th April 1943, in an examination of Blamey's report on the reorganisation of the forces.[5] The Defence Committee had been asked to examine the report so that the demands of the services for men might be correlated with their demands for materials and both coordinated with other aspects of manpower requirements. They had, as their starting-point, the estimate of the Director-General of Manpower that the monthly quota to meet the requirements of the services, munitions and aircraft production and the Allied Works Council was 10,000 men and 4,000 women; and they recommended that the monthly allocation should be 500 men to the navy, 4,000 men and 1,000 women to the army; 3,000 men and 1,000 women to the air force; 500 men and 2,000 women to Munitions and Aircraft Production and 2,000 men to the Allied Works Council. If this allocation were made the navy could be maintained at existing strength; the army forces on the mainland would have to be reduced by the equivalent of one infantry division in the next six months and, if the II Australian Corps were employed in an offensive role for a period of twelve months, by the equivalent of a further division; the R.A.A.F. could expand to 45 squadrons by the end of 1943 but further expansion in 1944 would be delayed. The Empire Air Training Scheme would be unaffected.

The Defence Committee also indicated those items of munitions and aircraft production which, from the service point of view, should be given absolute priority and, on their recommendation, action was at once taken to make a further review of all other demands for materials by the services, and all other priorities, having regard to the changed strategical situation and the manpower shortage.

Other recommendations made by the Defence Committee for conserving manpower were to the effect that MacArthur might be asked to provide Americans to relieve Australians of some of the maintenance services and works projects they were carrying out on behalf of United States forces; that consideration be given to extending the scope of work undertaken by prisoner-of-war labour, and that attention be given to further dilution of labour in skilled trades and to the possibility of delaying for the time being the lighting code for industrial establishments and the restriction to essential cases of canteen services. These recommendations, except for the three last ones, which were referred to the Department of Labour and National Service together with a proposal to extend hours of labour,

[5] War Cabinet Minute 2810.

were approved by the War Cabinet, and a representative committee established to effect necessary adjustments between the services, Munitions, Aircraft Production and Allied Works Council in the allocation and intake of manpower.[6]

Already there had been one major casualty in the adjustment of the war effort. A submission to War Cabinet on 1st July 1943 reviewed tank production in Australia which had been commenced at a time when there appeared to be little or no prospect of obtaining tanks from elsewhere, and reached the conclusion that sufficient tanks were now held in Australia to meet requirements for at least twelve months; that tanks could now be obtained from the United States; an Australian tank fit for service had not yet been produced and the relatively small production capacity and limited research facilities created a danger of being unable to keep pace with modern developments.[7] It was decided, after reference to the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area, to discontinue tank production in Australia, and that decision was subsequently concurred in by the Advisory War Council. The decision released about 2,300 workers. The total expenditure on the abandoned project had been £6,000,000. Commitments in respect to production of armoured fighting vehicles other than tanks were drastically reduced.[8]

The review initiated in July culminated in decisions taken in October for the reallocation of manpower, curtailment of the armed services and the release of men from the army and munitions industry. At a meeting on 1st October 1943 the War Cabinet had before it a report by the War Commitments Committee on the coordination of manpower and a review by the Defence Committee on the strength and composition of the army, navy and air force, together with papers prepared for the Full Cabinet on the food production programme.[9]

It was decided that the army should release a net total of 20,000 men by June 1944, additional to routine releases and seasonal releases or other arrangements made with the Director-General of Manpower; and the munitions and aircraft industries were also to release 20,000 by the same date although if, in the meantime, new munitions projects were approved by the War Cabinet the manpower needed for them could be set off against the total releases. In these releases first priority was to be given to the provision of 15,000 men for the rural industries. It was also intended that the routine releases from the services should provide another 5,000 men and "requisite numbers of women" for food processing. The monthly intake into the services was to be limited to 3,000 men and 2,000 women, subject to a further review in December 1943.

In a review of the war effort of the services a new and opportunistic

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[6] War Cabinet Minute 2969, 13 Jul on Agendum 272/1943.

[7] The information given to War Cabinet in the submission made to it has been disputed. See Mellor, pp. 317-20.

[8] War Cabinet Minute 2979 of 13 Jul on Agendum 299/1943; War Cabinet Minute 2978 of 13 Jul on Agendum 319/1943; Advisory War Council Agendum 33/1943 and Advisory War Council Minute 1241. See also Butlin and Mellor volumes in this series.

[9] War Cabinet Agenda 379/1943, 389/1943 and 226/1943, Supplement No. 1; Full Cabinet Agendum 536.

principle was established for limiting service commitments overseas. The minute reads, in part, as follows:

> War Cabinet reviewed the commitments overseas which had been entered into by Australia in respect of land, sea and air forces before the occurrence of the war in the Pacific. The following principles were affirmed:
>
> (*a*) It is of vital importance to the future of Australia and her status at the peace table in regard to the settlement in the Pacific that her military effort should be concentrated as far as possible in the Pacific and that it should be on a scale to guarantee her an effective voice in the peace settlement.
>
> (*b*) If necessary, the extent of this effort should be maintained at the expense of commitments in other theatres. In the interests of Australia and the British Empire in the Pacific, it is imperative that this view should be accepted by the United Kingdom and the other Dominions, especially New Zealand and Canada.

Australian thought on the war effort had been governed hitherto largely by such considerations as concern for the security of Australia from invasion and the limits on manpower. There had been from the beginning of the war, too, a certain watchfulness over the relationship between wartime developments and the post-war economic problems of Australia. This new idea that the war effort was an admission ticket to a peace conference was perhaps not novel in itself, but on this occasion it would almost seem as though the admission ticket was being confused with the currency with which it had to be purchased.[1]

As the whole of the A.I.F. had returned home, Australia's remaining commitments outside the South-West Pacific were limited to the navy and air force. At that time there were 3,404 naval personnel serving overseas, manning 6 destroyers and 13 mine-sweepers and taking part in anti-submarine work. The War Cabinet decided to make representations to the United Kingdom to the effect that it was difficult to maintain this commitment in view of the stringent manpower situation in Australia, its effect on the maintenance of adequate forces in the South-West Pacific Area and Australia's commitment under the Empire Air Training Scheme. The view was expressed by the War Cabinet that the future personnel requirements of the Royal Australian Navy could apparently only be provided for by the gradual return of personnel serving overseas.

Earlier in the year the War Cabinet had felt unable to meet a British request to send 4,000 ground staff from Australia to service the R.A.A.F. squadrons formed overseas under the Empire Air Training Scheme.[2] Now it decided that Australia's part in the Empire Air Scheme should

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[1] In a Ministerial statement in the House of Representatives in the same month Evatt made a claim that Australia had already purchased her right to take part in the settlement in Europe and developed this idea that there should be a direct relationship between the amount of fighting and the amount of peacemaking that a nation did: "Some publicists have suggested that the right to take part in the post-war European settlement should be limited to those nations who are prepared to 'police' the European settlement—whatever that may mean," he said. "My answer to that is: 'Australia has done its fair share in putting out the fire which was kindled in Europe and spread through the whole world. Our right to take a full and active part in the planning of the peace—not merely to be heard—should be assured to us as a result of what Australians have done towards winning the war.' One sometimes wishes that a just calculus could be devised whereby those nations desirous of taking part in the settlement of the post-war order should be given a voice or a vote strictly commensurate with the value of their contributions towards the final victory." *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, p. 570.

[2] War Cabinet Minutes 2584, 11 Jan, and 2616, 30 Jan 1943.

be "directly related to the contemplated strength of the R.A.A.F. in the South-West Pacific Area". There were, at that time, 20,052 R.A.A.F. personnel serving overseas and, as the monthly intake for the services was to be reduced, Australia could not keep up this commitment. It was decided to ask the United Kingdom to transfer more R.A.A.F. squadrons from overseas to Australia, continuing a process which had been initiated by arrangements made with Churchill by Evatt in 1942. To avoid disrupting the Empire Air Training Scheme it was decided that "the outflow of personnel should be continued on a diminishing basis as the number of R.A.A.F. overseas is reduced". The Minister for Air was asked to recommend what numbers should be sent overseas to fit in with this policy. Two out of the 18 R.A.A.F. squadrons originally planned under the Empire Air Training Scheme had not yet been formed and they should not be formed if such action would entail additional commitments in manpower.

As for the forces in the South-West Pacific Area—none of these being regarded as overseas commitments—it was agreed in principle that the navy should be limited to a strength to be governed by its capacity to replace its wastage by the return of the 3,404 personnel serving overseas and from its existing numbers in Australia. The army was to be restricted to a monthly intake of 550 men and 950 women. The air force was to receive 2,450 men and 1,050 women a month from which the reduced quota for the Empire Air Training Scheme should also be provided. The strength of the R.A.A.F. was to be stabilised at the present strength of 37 operational squadrons, 6 transport squadrons and 5 reserve squadrons, plus the number that could be transferred from the 14 E.A.T.S. squadrons still abroad and plus any that could be maintained from the new monthly intake.

Decisions were made to review again munitions and works programmes and these decisions should also be placed against the background of a growing total of Lend-Lease imports into Australia. By the end of June 1943 the United States Administration estimated that the figure was 552,000,000 dollars, and of the Lend-Lease shipments to Australia and New Zealand "approximately 61 per cent" had been munitions.[3] Reverse Lend-Lease aid to the United States at 30th June 1943 was set at £A60,792,000 (196,000,000 dollars at a conversion rate of 3.23 dollars).[4] Of this amount works was ahead with 66,000,000 dollars, stores and provisions next with 39,000,000, general stores 24,000,000 and transport and communications 21,000,000. There had, however, been important changes of policy in the first half of 1943. The *Lend-Lease Act* was renewed in March 1943 for a further year, but three months later the Administration decided to discontinue Lend-Lease supply of tobacco leaf for civilian requirements and in the latter half of the year a number of other essential civilian requirements were ruled to be ineligible for Lend-Lease.

[3] *Eleventh Report to Congress on Lend-Lease Operations*, p. 24.
[4] *Twelfth Report to Congress on Lend-Lease Operations*, p. 6.

As already indicated, rural industry was to receive 15,000 men out of the 40,000 to be released from the army and munitions work and the pool of seasonal farm workers was to be increased; various administrative arrangements were made to help reach the food production target, the existing programme being regarded as a maximum.

Other decisions were taken with a view to further inquiry into the possibility of additional measures to make manpower available from the less essential industries, to obtain the labour of prisoners of war and to limit the demands of the United States forces for goods and services.[5]

Although there were still to be nearly two years of hostilities, October 1943 marks the commencement of the final phase of the war. Henceforth there was no direct danger to Australia herself, and growing confidence in ultimate victory; henceforth Australia's importance, as the Government had once insisted that it should be, was the importance primarily of a base. At home, administration and policy became steadily more and more occupied with post-war reconstruction.

[5] War Cabinet Minute 3065, 1 Oct 1943.

CHAPTER 6

THE POLITICAL SCENE, JANUARY 1942 TO AUGUST 1943

1—THE ADVANTAGE OF THE LABOUR PARTY

AFTER the fall of Singapore, political contests were effaced for a time by national danger. When the one central issue was survival, other issues could not be argued convincingly or with credit to the disputants. As the months passed and immediate danger faded, the political contests reappeared. The fact that an election would have to be held towards the end of 1943 under the requirements of the Constitution and the *Electoral Act*, as well as the fact that danger was passing, made parties and parliamentarians think of electioneering. The measures which the Government took to extend controls and tighten restrictions were sometimes now coupled, not with wartime necessity, but with the professed socialism of some Labour adherents and reawakened the fears of the conservative and the liberal that fundamental changes might be wrought under the guise of wartime emergency.

The danger that Australia was in favoured the political fortunes of Labour. During 1942 the Labour Government did what it had criticised the previous Government for doing, and did it more vigorously than the previous Government had dared. In so doing it incurred some of the criticism which had troubled its predecessor but gained credit for strong leadership of the nation. When the danger was stark, Curtin could command a response in the name of patriotism in a way which made criticism or hesitation seem traitorous.

Labour was favoured, too, during 1942 by the demoralisation of the Opposition. Fadden, as the defeated Prime Minister, continued as Leader of the Opposition, although his own party, the Country Party, was the weaker of the two parties in Opposition. His gifts might enable him to keep the Opposition parties breathing and to pick up a little political advantage here and there, but he was not likely to do more. At that stage the Opposition parties needed badly the animating power of ideas if not a new act of original creation. The current misfortune of the United Australia Party was that the downward course which had been followed almost since the day of its formation under Lyons had brought it almost to a point of ideological poverty. In the condition in which they found themselves at this time, the Opposition could only appear as a body of men who were raising objections but had no clear policy of their own.

The possibility that Fadden might lead a dynamic Opposition was limited by two other facts. Although he was Leader of the Opposition he ceased to appear as a prospective Prime Minister, partly because he was head of a minority party, and partly because, whether fairly or unfairly, he did not in fact rank in public estimation as the leader of a

nation at war. Furthermore, if ever a change of government were in prospect, he would have rivals for the Prime Ministership. Viewed at the beginning of 1943, the Opposition showed little capacity to make a bid for office. Its will to fight for power was impaired partly by the dissension in which it had lost office and possibly to a far greater extent by the feeling among many of its own members that in a time of national peril there was a patriotic duty to support the Government. Those who when in power had urged a national government or, failing that, had called for single-minded support from Labour in the war effort of the nation, did not all go back on their words but accepted some responsibility in Opposition to support war measures.

These various factors of patriotism, of internal dissension, and of uncertainty in leadership and political aims, had the one clear outcome. The Opposition had no strong claim to regain power.

The Labour Party, in office, revealed a notable talent for presenting itself favourably to the people. No political party can afford to be modest and all prefer to be bold in their assertions rather than scrupulous in detail when giving a public account of themselves. The Labour Party, favoured by the new circumstances of national peril, went a long way towards identifying the war effort with the Curtin Government so that to oppose one was to oppose the other. Indeed it succeeded so well that at the end of the war it had established a legend, which none of its more thoughtful and critical members would wish to sustain in disregard of the effort of the troops and the people, that the Labour Party had won the war, or, as an alternative statement, that the Labour Party had saved Australia.

The recital of Labour's achievements was supplemented by the continuous campaign of detraction of its opponents which was being conducted by factions and segments on the Left of politics. The traducement of Menzies, in particular, reached new vehemence.[1] On the other hand Curtin was being favourably presented and was growing in public estimation for the qualities of sincerity, simplicity and, in a pleasing sense, of ordinariness which are so acceptable to the Australian electorate.[2] In short, the Government was presenting itself with confidence to the people and was suffering little, if any, damage from the attacks on it by an Opposition which had been daubed with the blame for anything that had gone wrong in the

[1] An example is *Australia's Guilty Men and their Conspiracy Against the Labour Government*, by Len Fox, issued by the New South Wales State Labour Party, April 1943.

[2] Although it has not been the practice in these volumes to single out for mention persons without political responsibility, an exception might be made here for Mr D. K. Rodgers. Although there had been "public relations officers" attached to Prime Ministerial staffs since the time of Lyons, Rodgers, with the modest title of "press secretary" to Mr Curtin, deserves historical notice as one who first made public relations a significant factor in Australian Federal politics. Under his guidance the way the personality of a Prime Minister was made a picture in the minds of the people, and the way in which any Prime Ministerial action was made known to the people, were matters planned with shrewdness and shaped with conscious art. A Labour supporter, steeped in Labour politics from childhood, a capable journalist and devoted to Curtin as a man, Rodgers was able to concentrate on achieving the desired result of commending Curtin and the Labour Party to the people of Australia. Such a public relations man is not only a good window dresser but, in companionship with the statesman, has some influence on the nature of the political wares to be displayed. He not only helps to sell ideas; he knows what ideas are marketable, either because the people want them or because they can be persuaded that they want them. The picture most Australians had of Curtin and, after him, of Chifley was in part due to Rodgers as well as to life.

war effort and which exposed its own weaknesses just as frequently as it criticised those of the Labour Party.

Yet nothing that has been written above about electoral prospects can alter the fact that while Australia was at war men still played politics and often played it "hard and mean". The present chapter will reveal not only the issues in wartime electoral campaigning but the way in which the political contest and the striving for party advantage had a bearing on some of the decisions affecting the conduct of the war.

2—PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS

The emergency in early 1942 brought some modification of parliamentary practice. After a Christmas recess of nine weeks, Parliament was summoned by the President and Speaker to meet again on 20th February. In the House, Curtin immediately moved that a joint meeting of both Chambers be convened to discuss in secret the war and to hear confidential reports on it.

Secret meetings of Parliament in 1941 had been arranged by the procedure in the House of Representatives of drawing attention to the presence of "strangers" and ordering them to withdraw; then the Speaker observing that Senators were still present, a motion was agreed to that Senators be invited to remain. By motion of the House the recording of debates was suspended and the Hansard staff withdrew. At the end of the secret sitting strangers were readmitted and recording of debates was resumed.[3]

In 1942, however, the Prime Minister moved a resolution for a secret meeting and announced that a regulation had been gazetted, in anticipation of the motion being carried, providing for the complete observance of secrecy. He quoted the regulation[4] as follows:

1. The proceedings at any meeting of the Senate and of the House of Representatives convened by the Prime Minister, the President of the Senate, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives, or by any or all of those persons for the purpose of discussing in secret the present war and hearing confidential reports in relation thereto, shall be kept secret.

2. A person shall not divulge any information made known at any such meeting, or publish or cause to be published any report being or purporting to be a report of any such proceedings, or of any portion thereof, except a report made officially by the Prime Minister.

This regulation shall not apply to any joint meeting of members of the Senate and

[3] This was the procedure on the second of the two secret sessions. On the first occasion the procedures would not appear to have been fully developed. See *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 167, pp. 40, 55 and 73, and Vol 168, pp. 11-14. See also J. R. Odgers, *Australian Senate Practice* (third edn. 1967), p. 444.

[4] Statutory Rules 1942, No. 78, Regulation 37, 19 Feb 1942, made under the *National Security Act* 1939-40. It will be noted that the regulation, which lapsed on 31st December 1947, gave to the Prime Minister, as well as to the Presiding Officers of Parliament, a power to convene a joint meeting, with or without their concurrence, and that the Prime Minister had the sole authority for making any report of the proceedings. A resolution of each Chamber was required for such a meeting to be held. So far as is known, no decisions regarding procedures or conduct of business at these secret meetings (e.g. on such questions as who presides and whether votes can be taken) have been recorded. See *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 6. The recollection of some of those present was that all these joint secret sessions were held in the Chamber of the House of Representatives and that the Speaker presided, but recollections of others are not so clear.

of the House of Representatives unless each House has carried a resolution that a joint meeting of members of the Senate and of the House of Representatives be convened for the purpose of discussing in secret the present war and hearing confidential reports in relation thereto.

The practice of the Australian Parliament in those days had been to meet on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of each week during its period of sitting. When the House sat again on 25th February, however, Curtin proposed that it should sit for only one day because the executive desired "to use this week for a matter of great urgency—preparation and organisation for other than parliamentary work".[5] Parliament agreed, although Mr Rosevear and Mr Brennan demurred.

In the Advisory War Council a non-Government member had already raised the question of when Parliament would meet, and on 5th March, in the council, a provisional arrangement was made that Parliament should meet less frequently but regularly, normally on the second Wednesday in each month, and as a general rule sit on three consecutive days.[6] In fact the House met on 5th and 6th March and again on the 25th. In moving the adjournment on 6th March, Curtin acknowledged the view "repeatedly put forward" by his own party members "that Parliament should meet regularly for the purposes of consultation and review of the administration of the war". He proposed that henceforward Parliament should meet on the fourth Wednesday on each month, for three sitting days or longer if it was not possible to complete necessary business in that time. To this Mr Fadden agreed, although some members from both sides of the House disapproved. Curtin saw fit to remind them:

It is silly for any honorable member to assume that the normal functioning of Parliament, the normal functioning of government, or the normal consultation which is incidental to the proper democratic examination of governmental proposals, is at all feasible at this particular period in our history. I humbug neither myself nor the country by presuming to carry on in a normal way either in this Parliament, in the Cabinet room, or elsewhere.[7]

Under this new arrangement Parliament met on 25th, 26th and 27th March, on 29th and 30th April and 1st May, but in order to complete its legislation it had weekly sittings during the rest of May before adjourning on 4th June for the customary winter recess. Thus the interruption of the normal functioning of Parliament by reason of the emergency was only felt during the critical months of February, March and April.

During the period of sitting a Loan Bill for £75,000,000 was the occasion for a debate on methods of war finance. Commending the Bill in a two-minute speech, the Treasurer said little more than that the money was needed.

In existing circumstances, it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty what our requirements will be; but it is anticipated that the present bill will cover loan expenditure to 30th June next.[8]

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[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 38.
[6] Advisory War Council Minute 814, 5 Mar 1942.
[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 252.
[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 133.

Since the beginning of the war, loan appropriations had amounted to £234,000,000.

Fadden raised objection, not to raising and spending the money, but to "the general financial policy that is being pursued by the Government".

Fadden argued that the Government had rejected the method of compulsory loans, by which part of the increased incomes of the wage-earners could be drawn back into Government use for war purposes and the excess spending power in the community reduced, but it had been disappointed in its hope that the wage-earners would respond to the appeal to put their surplus earnings into war savings certificates or war loans. On the other hand the policy of the Government in limiting profits and increasing taxation on higher incomes had reduced the capacity of the "investing public" to subscribe to loans. Moreover statements attributed to Mr Ward in favour of socialisation of banks and industry and repudiation of interest on war loans had shaken the confidence of the investors.

The situation was presented in another way by Spooner, who argued that there were contradictory influences in Government policy. The war had placed an enormous spending power in the hands of "people with incomes below £400 a year". The Government would not go further in taxing these lower incomes but the policy of the Prices Commission tried "to force profits back into the hands of the public for further expenditure" and was keeping the spending power in the hands of the public and helping to set up a demand for goods for civilian consumption in competition with war needs. Spooner advocated a system of rationing of consumer goods.

On the Government side, Calwell made a doctrinaire protest against financing the war from loans. "The policy of the Labour Party," he said, "opposes not only the raising of money by loans for the conduct of the war, but also the payment of interest on such money." He protested that the Bill "cuts directly across the platform and traditional policy of the Labour Party" and declared that there was great discontent among Labour supporters. He received some support from other Government members, both those who were strong on doctrine and those who were assiduous in courting "the masses". Ward was foremost among the second lot. Speaking as a Minister at the table of the House in answer to attacks made on him by Opposition speakers, he denied that he had said that interest on past loans should be repudiated but expressed the opinion that war should be financed by taxation and not by loans and that "nobody shall profit as the result of the country's participation in its own defence". After a reference to compulsory military service and compulsory labour, he asked: "If labour power and every other resource of the country is to go into the pool, why should there be such strong resistance and protest whenever it is suggested that profits should go in?"

On the Opposition side, various speakers tried to play on this division of opinion in the Labour Party. They could find little of use to them in supporting Calwell's view on Labour doctrine, for they certainly were not going to oppose the passage of the Loan Bill, which they regarded

as essential, and so they concentrated their criticism on the utterances of Ward. Magnifying what he had said, they asked whether in speaking at the table of the House he had spoken for the Government. "No Minister can speak from the table of this House as a private citizen," said Menzies. He asked whether this spokesman of the Government was declaring that no interest would be paid on loans. "The second point," he continued, "is that we heard a Minister, speaking as a Minister from the table, deliver what can only be described as a new communist manifesto, namely that in order to get an all-in war effort everybody in this country called upon to do work of any kind shall receive exactly the same remuneration and shall receive it, not in cash, but in coupons."

The debating strength of Menzies's argument lay in the fact that the only Ministerial speech on the Bill other than that of Ward had been a laconic two minutes from Chifley, and, apart from five uncomfortable minutes by Dedman, the Ministers continued to keep out of the debate.

The Prime Minister, in a brief prepared statement in which he ignored the challenge to him to correct Ward in public, said that the Government regarded each loan as a contract and would completely discharge every condition set out in the prospectus of each loan.

The Treasurer, moralising on a debate which had not set "an edifying or inspiring example to the people", observed that the Opposition had found that Ward had been able to play the game of personal recrimination better than they could. On the more substantial points raised in the debate he said that when a Government had used bank credit beyond "the point where all of the national resources are involved and all man-power is engaged", it must impose stiff control so that inflation would not occur. His speech did not attempt any exposition of the broad principles of financing the war, nor did he venture on any discussion regarding points Calwell had raised on Labour policy against war loans.[9]

The Loan Bill was passed without any division.

On 25th March, Curtin presented a review of the war situation, and shortly afterwards the text of cables concerning the appointment of Mr Casey (Australian Minister in Washington) as United Kingdom Minister of State in the Middle East.

On 12th March Mr Churchill had asked for Mr Curtin's views on a proposal to appoint Casey to this position. Curtin pointed out that, while the suggestion was a compliment to Casey and Australians, "replacement of Mr Casey at this stage would be a matter of great difficulty for this Government . . . a new man would take some time to establish himself. All things considered, probably it would be in the interests of us all if the approach was not made at this juncture."[1] Churchill persisted, however, pointing out that senior Ministers and Chiefs of Staff who had been consulted all agreed that Casey was wanted. Moreover, in the previous

[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 133-172.

[1] Curtin to Churchill, 13 Mar; Parliamentary Papers 1942, F.2192, *Documents Relating to Appointment of H.M. Australian Minister at Washington (Right Hon. R. G. Casey) As Minister of State of the United Kingdom, 12th-21st March, 1942*, p. 3.

December Casey had intimated to Churchill that "he was very anxious for a change". Churchill went farther; he suggested that Menzies would be a suitable successor for Casey in Washington, and begged that his intrusion into Australian affairs should not be resented.

To this Curtin replied that the Australian Government had an equally high view of Casey, but "our whole purpose is that in view of Evatt's almost due arrival in Washington we greatly hope Casey will be there, as that conjunction would be invaluable. That is the full text of our demurrer. Casey has never intimated to me any desire for change, but we would not stand in the way of your desires. We do hope, however, that Casey stays long enough to meet Evatt and thus accomplish our desires."[2] Churchill's reply was brief: "I am greatly obliged and will now telegraph to Casey. Of course he can wait to discuss everything with Evatt."[3]

Thereafter there were exchanges between Curtin and Casey in which Curtin stressed the embarrassment that would be caused if Casey relinquished the post, the importance the Australian Government attached to representation in America, and to the contacts Casey had made there, and that "the wishes of the Commonwealth Government are to make no change in Australian diplomatic representation at Washington as matters stand. This is a factor which you will naturally take into account in forming your decision, but I emphasise that it is to be regarded not as instruction or advice but only as an expression of opinion."[4] To the War Cabinet on the 16th Curtin reported Churchill's offer and his own reply that "no objection would be raised to the appointment", but that Casey should remain in the United States long enough to afford Dr Evatt all possible assistance.[5] On the 19th Casey told Curtin he would accept Churchill's offer, and in a later message intimated that Churchill intended to make an announcement "within a few hours".

Churchill's announcement to the British Parliament, however, was made at noon on the 19th. A report of it appeared in the Australian morning papers on the 20th together with a comment by Curtin in which he recounted what had happened, but almost entirely in terms of the disservice that was being done to Australia. "In the most specific language I intimated to Mr Casey that having regard to all the circumstances it was the wish of the Commonwealth Government not to make any change in Australian diplomatic representation at Washington as matters stood. I made it clear that that was our wish but that it was not an instruction."[6]

His statement, reported in London, drew from Churchill the protest that he could not reconcile this with Curtin's telegram of 14th March; he, Churchill, had met the conditions by having Casey wait for so long as Evatt needed him, and he now felt that he must quote that telegram "unless in some way or other you can clear up the situation".[7] This protest by Churchill was reported in the Australian papers of the 21st; and under

[2] Curtin to Churchill, 14 Mar, Documents, p. 3.
[3] Churchill to Curtin, 14 Mar, Documents, p. 3.
[4] Curtin to Casey, 17 Mar, Documents, p. 4.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 2001.
[6] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Mar 1942.
[7] Churchill to Curtin, 19 Mar, Documents, p. 5.

a heading "Left Own Government in the Dark" one newspaper announced that "it can be stated definitely" that there was not the slightest grievance about Churchill making or offering the appointment, but "it can be added equally definitely that the Government feels a very marked grievance over Mr Casey's acceptance. . . ."[8]

Curtin's own reply to Churchill said that the Australian Government had not desired a change at Washington, Churchill had persisted, and Curtin's view had been that "you wanted Casey and that Casey was eager". But, Curtin added: ". . . hours prior to Casey cabling me from San Francisco his acceptance of your offer the B.B.C. announced it to Australia. I learn what my Minister has done from the world at large."[9] Curtin said he would table the telegrams in the House.

In England the Dominions Office had been instructed to send a telegram to Curtin giving the text of the statement to be made to the British Parliament; this telegram was dated the 19th. In Australia the text of all the telegrams was made available to the Australian press without waiting for the White Paper to Parliament, and in consequence newspaper leading articles of 21st March gave a summary of the events and commented on them.[1] The editorials said chiefly that Churchill had erred in continuing to press a matter on which the Australian Prime Minister had given emphatic views; that Curtin's telegram of the 14th would, in fact, lead the British Prime Minister to believe that he acquiesced in the appointment; that the propriety of a British Prime Minister naming a successor to an Australian Ambassador was doubtful. But in the main the view of the whole incident was that it was "deplorable that an appearance of controversy between the British and Australian Prime Ministers should have surrounded the appointment". They could not afford the luxury of public disputation, and it was to be profoundly hoped that the matter would be "speedily closed".[2] Labour newspapers were less circumspect and described Churchill's suggestions as "extraordinary" and "sinister", and the appointment as "disturbing". One paper spoke of Churchill's "childish resentfulness" when he did not get things his own way, and recalled Curtin's appeal to America for help.[3]

When the White Paper was presented to Parliament by Curtin on the 25th, Fadden, in a short speech, indicated that "no useful purpose could possibly be served" by debating it. But Cameron disagreed, and proceeded to attack the Government for what he described as its anti-British attitude. Traditional Labour policy apart, there had been a marked tendency on the part of some to so interpret Labour's attitude, particularly after Curtin's speech in December; and the language of part of the Labour press appeared to strengthen that interpretation.

The whole incident was of no lasting importance; it received extensive

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[8] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Mar.

[9] Curtin to Churchill, 20 Mar, Documents, p. 5.

[1] Churchill therefore released the text of the cables and these were published in full in Australian papers of 23rd March. Since this release included the mention of Menzies in the telegram of the 14th, the suppression of his name in the White Paper is rather pointless.

[2] *Sydney Morning Herald.*

[3] *Australian Worker* and *Century.*

publicity partly because March 1942 was a particularly low ebb in Australian wartime affairs, and personal feelings ran high in the atmosphere of alarm and uncertainty.

Some attempts during this period to disallow regulations have been described in an earlier chapter.[4] In one or both Houses there were successive attempts to disallow part or all of the regulations on coal control, waterside employment, contracts adjustment, conscientious objectors, employment of women, landlord and tenant, mobilisation of services and property regulations, and supplementary regulations governing accounts of the Commonwealth Bank. The motion on conscientious objectors succeeded, and the regulations on employment of women were ultimately replaced by special legislation.

The debates on these regulations during the period of sitting reveals that the main criticisms directed against the Government were based on allegations that Ministers were "pandering" to the trade union executives without obtaining the desired results in the coalfields or on the waterfront and on allegations of unfair and unequal treatment of sections of the community. The basic objections were not to giving great power to the Executive but to the way Ministers used the powers, the way they delegated them to "unaccountable people" and the disregard or absence of safeguards sufficient to enable the citizen at least to test any alleged interference with his rights.

A group of social service measures received support from both sides of Parliament. The Invalid and Old Age Pensioners Bill raised the rate of pension of 25s. a week, simplified some procedures, removed the automatic suspension of a pension when a pensioner entered a hospital and extended certain benefits to aborigines. Associated with it was a Maternity Allowance Bill, extending the benefits of that Act to aborigines and a Child Endowment Bill and a Widows' Pensions Bill, widening the scope of those two schemes. These measures were derived from the 1941-42 Budget. In taking over from his predecessor the Budget, on which Fadden had been defeated in October 1941, Chifley had proposed an extra £1,115,000 for pension increases but legislation to give effect to the proposals had been delayed by the events of the war. One point of interest in the debate was that all sides rejected any idea that it was inopportune to attend to social services in wartime. "So far as lies in our power," the Minister for Social Services, Holloway, said, "we shall at least prevent a lowering of social standards during the war, and we have every intention of improving them from time to time." His predecessor, Sir Frederick Stewart, now in Opposition, said: "We are pleased indeed that, amidst all the turmoil and financial stresses and strains of the war, the Government has seen its way clear to finance this measure. . . . I believe we are more likely to succeed in this conflict if we are able to maintain the morale of the people by giving at least an instalment

[4] See Chapter 2, Section 5, above.

of this new social order by eliminating these inequalities which are most obvious and blatant today." Stewart also said that as war loadings were being granted to various workers as well as automatic increases in the basic wage, surely pensioners should receive like consideration. A second point of interest was that the Government definitely linked the rise in the pension rate to the rise in the cost-of-living index. As regards aborigines, ground had been broken by the Menzies Government in giving them the benefit of child endowment; and Holloway's series of Bills continued in the same direction by authorising payment of the maternity allowance to them and extending age and invalid pensions to "aboriginal natives of Australia who are living under civilised conditions and whose character and intelligence qualify them to receive pensions". Payment was to be made, either in whole or in part, and either to the pensioner or to "a suitable authority or person for the benefit of pensioners" according to the discretion of the Commissioner of Pensions. Thus the Bills authorised the payment of benefits to aborigines rather than establishing the entitlement of aborigines to benefits.[5]

The consideration of these measures was facilitated by the work of the Joint Committee on Social Security set up by Menzies and the innovations on widows' pensions had been recommended in the interim report presented by them in September 1941.[6]

A controversial question, the political effects of which were localised, concerned the gold-mining industry. Following the economic depression, the industry had recovered and production had climbed to a new peak when war broke out. Over 70 per cent of Australian production was in Western Australia, and, according to one estimate, the industry indirectly supported about 25 per cent of the population of that State. The industry was only slightly affected in the first two years of war but the regulation of industry and control of manpower after war came to the Pacific had caused growing concern about what would happen to the industry, to the men employed in it and to the State of Western Australia. This concern was heightened because very little of the munitions and other wartime productive activity had been allocated to that State.

The Labour member for Kalgoorlie, Mr Johnson,[7] made a tour of his electorate from 10th to 13th March, obviously concerned to enlist the sympathy and cooperation of those affected by any reduction in gold production. He advanced the need for manpower as the reason for any government move to transfer men from the industry, in particular the needs of the Allied Works Council. He was followed a week later by Senator Allan MacDonald,[8] an Opposition Senator from Western Australia,

[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 705-10, 997-1022 and 1303 *et seq.* See also *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p. 521.

[6] See *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp. 368-9; *Interim Report from the Joint Committee on Social Security, 24th September 1941*, Parliamentary Papers 1940-41, Vol II (No. 48, Group H); *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 1236.

[7] Hon H. V. Johnson. MHR 1940-58; Minister for Interior 1945-49. B. Northampton, WA, 25 Oct 1889. Died 10 Jul 1962.

[8] Hon A. N. MacDonald. Senator 1934-47. Minister without Portfolio 1937-39. B. 25 Aug 1892.

who also met and talked with local representatives, and then led a delegation to the Labour Premier, Willcock,[9] in Perth. MacDonald was not prepared to support the Government's policy, and therefore, while presenting the plight of the Western Australian gold-mining industry, gave less weight than Johnson did to the national needs of total manpower, and made much more of the inequitable treatment of Western Australia.

On 20th April, Dedman, as Minister for War Organisation of Industry visited the West. He stopped at Kalgoorlie on his way back and there issued a guarded statement.[1] He had, he said, come to examine manpower shortages in the whole State, and because he had found shortages in many industries in Perth he had then and there applied prohibitions on manufacture which had in fact been in force in eastern States since February. The Government had no intention of applying the complete closure of the gold industry, but—and he stressed the point—he was only the chairman of Production Executive; it would be for Production Executive to decide what should be done. Makin, Minister for Munitions, and N. K. S. Brodribb, his Controller-General, had visited the goldfields two or three days before. They announced themselves impressed by possibilities of using plant at some of the mines for the manufacture of machine tools.

The decisive factor in the whole situation was the national need for manpower, and it was this aspect which was stressed when, on 7th May, Dedman made an official statement in the House. All interests had been consulted, he claimed, but

> the paramount consideration . . . must be the most effective use of the nation's manpower in the prosecution of the war. Because of this I now announce, first, that no protection can be given to the industry from the call-up for military service of men directly or indirectly engaged therein. Exemptions on a very limited scale of key men responsible for maintenance of safety in the mines will continue. Secondly, the industry must be prepared to have withdrawn from it, for service in connection with allied works projects, a proportion of the men remaining after military requirements have been satisfied. . . . The method of withdrawing these men will be a matter for consultation with the mineowners and the union so as to ensure that as little disturbance as possible is caused to the industry.[2]

Subsequently there were angry exchanges between the two members who had visited the area about the extent to which unions and mineowners had either been consulted or had agreed to Dedman's proposition. Moreover Western Australians drew invidious comparisons between the record of the coalminers, and the treatment they received, with that of the goldfields workers, and the treatment they received. Surely, they contended, non-essential industries in the East which still flourished should be made to release manpower before one which happened to be a basic industry to

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[9] Hon J. C. Willcock. MLA WA 1917-47; Premier and Treasurer 1936-45. B. Frogmoor, NSW, 9 Aug 1879. Died 7 Jun 1956.

[1] The *Kalgoorlie Miner* voiced prevailing local sentiments when it wrote: "MR DEDMAN IT IS UP TO YOU. As Minister for W.O.I. you should tell the people of the goldfields in plain unequivocal words what is your policy towards the gold-mining industry. The state of uncertainty and indecision has resulted in wild harmful rumours. We must know the Federal Government's intentions; it is only fair to the mine managements, the miners and the townspeople."

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 976, 7 May.

their particular State.[3] But the Government stood firm by its policy; goldmining was less essential than other activities, and must therefore release manpower even at the expense of closing mines.

At the end of June the Government made a grant of £100,000 to be used in maintenance of gold mines which would be closed down as a result of the call-up of miners for war service so that the mines would be able to resume work after the war. Call-ups would be on the lines agreed upon with representatives of the industry, subject to a reserve of about 4,500 men remaining in the mines for the time being. Goldmining in other States would also be reviewed with a view to assessing the financial help needed after similar withdrawal of men.

In this period of sitting decisions were made which inaugurated what became known as "uniform tax". Although presented as a wartime measure, and to meet a genuine and pressing wartime need, this set Australia on a course towards centralisation of fiscal control. The event was critical in the development of relationships between Commonwealth and States and in testing Federal wartime legislative powers.

Although the Commonwealth might claim to exercise almost unlimited powers to prosecute the war under the *Defence Act* and the *National Security Act*, it was politically impracticable to exercise those powers without paying regard to the view of the State Governments, and it was administratively convenient, if not essential, to have the cooperation of State instrumentalities and State public servants in many matters. At intervals, conferences with State Premiers had been held on a variety of topics. For example, air raid precautions required action through State-controlled fire brigades and police forces, and the administration of manpower controls could only be made effective by the use of personnel in State public services. The States had long since been persuaded to vacate the field of public works expenditure in order that the Commonwealth should have full scope for its programme of defence works and the States had assisted Commonwealth attempts to coordinate transport in wartime.

Cooperation between States and Commonwealth was always accompanied by keen and watchful concern by State Governments, jealous of State rights and of their own status. Whether a State Government was Labour or non-Labour made little difference to governmental attitudes although a State Labour Government might be less confident of the backing of its non-parliamentary supporters. The one question on which they were all most sensitive and most obdurate was their right to tax. This was not only a question of guarding their rights but of the availability of revenues to give effect to their own policies.

In 1941 Fadden had tried to persuade the States to make a temporary surrender of their powers to impose income tax and had submitted various proposals for compensatory benefits. The Premiers had rejected his proposals. Now Chifley forced the issue.

[3] "It is no exaggeration to say that there are probably as many persons engaged in making lollies and chocolates in the East as there are employed in the great gold-mining industry of Western Australia." (*Westralian Worker.*)

In April 1942 the Commonwealth, after receiving the report of a committee appointed to investigate the problem of income tax, announced to a conference of State Premiers reasons why there should be only one income taxing authority in Australia. The State Premiers again rejected the idea. In disregard of the Premiers' views, on 15th May 1942, Chifley introduced four income tax measures into the Commonwealth Parliament[4] the effect of which would be that for the duration of the war and for the financial year in which the war came to an end the Commonwealth would be the sole authority to tax incomes and that the States would be reimbursed for their lost revenue. This effect was achieved not by saying that the States were not to impose income tax but, more subtly, by proposing to deprive the States of the officials and the equipment by means of which they assessed and collected income tax, by providing that the Commonwealth would impose income tax sufficient to raise both what was needed for Commonwealth expenditures and an additional amount to meet the requirements of the States, and by also providing that any State which refrained from imposing income tax would receive financial assistance from the Commonwealth and that a State could not collect any income tax it imposed until the Commonwealth tax had been paid in full.

Chifley's second reading speech on the first of the series of Bills was uncompromising. He drew heavily on the report of the committee whose work had preceded the drafting of the Bills.[5] He recalled that two previous attempts to find a solution to the competition between Commonwealth and State Governments in the income tax field had been summarily rejected on the plea that they represented an invasion of State rights. The war had confronted the Commonwealth with the task of mobilising the complete resources of the nation; its financial obligations had increased far beyond anything previously imagined.

> The position has become so serious that strong and definite action must be taken by the Commonwealth to cut this Gordian knot, if any simplification of Commonwealth and State taxes is to be achieved in the interests of the war effort. . . . Nothing short of complete control by the Commonwealth during the war will meet the huge demands that have to be faced. National rights must take precedence over all State rights. The rights of the sovereign people are paramount to the sovereign rights of the States.[6]

While the Bills were before Parliament, a section of the press in New South Wales welcomed the move, and referred to a "feeling of impatience and resentment that such a measure should have encountered nothing but hostility from State Governments".[7] But the reaction of the Premier of New South Wales was to send an alternative plan to the Commonwealth Treasurer. This course was also followed by the Queensland Labour Premier, Forgan Smith, and on the 20th C. G. Fallon, secretary of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Workers' Union and president of

[4] Income Tax (Wartime Arrangements) Bill, States Grants (Income Tax Reimbursement) Bill, Income Tax Assessment Bill, Income Tax Bill.

[5] *Report of the Committee on Uniform Taxation—Professor R. C. Mills, Right Honorable J. H. Scullin, Honorable E. S. Spooner* (1942).

[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 1286.

[7] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May.

the Federal Executive of the Australian Labour Party, went to Canberra to voice Queensland's opposition. Forgan Smith declared that the Commonwealth took no account of the increasing costs to the States of social services and similar policies in wartime, nor of their responsibility for dealing with unemployment. In Victoria and South Australia, State government opposition was vehement: "Canberra . . . has swept aside every consideration except its own more and more intense desire to destroy the Federal system."[8] The Victorian Premier announced that the Commonwealth's action would be tested in the High Court. Tasmania sent a delegation to the Federal Treasurer, but an amicable arrangement to increase the Tasmanian reimbursement grant ended opposition from that quarter.

By the 23rd it was clear that South Australia and Victoria would join forces in a legal battle to oppose the Bill, alleging violation of Sections 51, 96 and 99 of the Commonwealth Constitution and claiming that the destruction of the States could not be justified as a need of defence. At the same time another Labour Premier, Willcock from Western Australia, on his way to Canberra, expressed his unalterable opposition to uniform taxation and, with an oblique reference to Tasmania, avowed that no concession would win over Western Australia.

In the parliamentary debate Chifley gave scant attention to the constitutional issues. He said that the Government did not "seek to take away from the States their power to impose taxes upon incomes, but proposes to make a payment of financial assistance to any State which agrees to suspend that power in the interests of national defence". He stressed that the Commonwealth needed to get the maximum yield from the income tax field and no scheme which did not give this could possibly be acceptable.

The rest of his second reading speech, lasting only fifteen minutes, dealt with a few practical details. It is doubtful if ever a major matter has been dealt with so cursorily in Parliament.

On the other Bills his second reading speeches were even briefer. On the second Bill, in five minutes he stated what reimbursement each State would receive; on the third, the Assessment Bill, he took less than fifteen minutes to explain the ways in which the Government, mostly following the committee's recommendations, would establish "a workable uniform system". The fourth, the Income Tax Bill, occupied him for about six minutes, mainly speaking to explain tables he had circulated to members giving the incidence of the tax at various levels of income.[9]

Leading the debate for the Opposition, Fadden conceded the need to mobilise completely the resources of the nation. He recalled his own efforts to achieve taxation uniformity when he was Treasurer and contrasted his attempt to work out a plan with the States to Chifley's presentation of a single proposal as the only way to have uniform taxation. He criticised in some detail Chifley's proposals and objected both to the

[8] *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 18 May.
[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 1285-1302.

"arbitrary methods" of compensating the States for loss of income and the inequities, complexities and anomalies in the scheme in its application to various groups of taxpayers. The present scheme was not as good as the one that Fadden himself had proposed when Treasurer.

Curtin made a politically skilful speech, moving smoothly and rapidly over the need to mobilise the nation's resources, the Commonwealth's responsibility for defence, the place of taxation in curbing excess spending, the generosity of the Commonwealth to the States, the need for equality of sacrifice, the stubbornness of the States in rejecting uniform taxation and the weakness of State arguments about their claim for money for development, the need to peg State expenditures and, once again, repeated the need to mobilise the nation's resources for war. There was perhaps only one passage which had a direct bearing on the matter which was to develop as the central issue in this controversial question:

> We do not contemplate amending the Constitution in order to impose a system of uniform taxation throughout Australia. We say to the States: "If you impose income tax you will receive no compensation from us. On the other hand, if you vacate the income tax field, we shall give you the money that you would otherwise have raised for yourselves." I ask the States to accept that arrangement.[1]

A notable speech was made by Menzies, who isolated the fact that the proposals affected "the whole of the relations between the Commonwealth and the States in time of war and perhaps also in time of peace". So far as the practical purpose of the measures were concerned he held the opinion that the method of uniform taxation proposed was not as good as the one Fadden had proposed in the previous year. His main arguments, however, concerned the constitutional issues and he argued at some length and with authority first that this was not a Commonwealth taxation law as it sought to impose a tax partly for Commonwealth purposes and partly for State purposes; that it was an endeavour to make the taxation power exclusive although the Constitution had made it concurrent; and that the scheme, by depriving the States of the power to raise revenue by direct taxation violated the federal nature of the Constitution. He therefore doubted whether the proposed law could be upheld under the taxation powers of the Commonwealth. The question whether it could be upheld under the defence power was immeasurably more difficult. Referring to Sections 106 and 107 of the Constitution which "recognise and require the continued existence of the States" he argued that "not even by the use of the defence power of the Commonwealth can we alter the Constitution by destroying the States as polities".

At this point an Opposition member interjected: "We are not destroying the States" and another chipped in: "We are just putting a bomb under them."[2]

Menzies had doubt of the validity of the scheme and thought Parliament should not run the risk of invalidity. Most other members were ready to

[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 171, pp. 1577-83. This passage gives point to the remark by Menzies in *Central Power in the Australian Commonwealth* (1968), p. 80, that the highwaymen on Hounslow Heath who "negotiated with people in coaches about their jewellery" were giving them a choice—your jewellery or your life.

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 171, pp. 1660-69.

take the risk and the senior spokesmen of the Government scarcely appeared to consider it. Scullin's reply to Menzies on constitutional questions was simply that the Government had taken advice and would "proceed with its plans with confidence". To him and to many other speakers on both sides of the House the wartime need for the measure and the convenience of having uniform taxation sufficiently justified the measures.

What seems to have been imperfectly appreciated by many members was that this was not just a question of constitutional validity to be argued by lawyers but one of making what might prove to be a permanent change in the relationships of the Commonwealth and States. Several of those who did suspect that this might be so took comfort in an assurance that these were temporary wartime measures. A few others, including Calwell, who foresaw the change clearly, hoped that it would take place. Calwell said he hoped that the States would challenge the legislation in the High Court because if the case went against them a precedent would be established. He was so sure of the outcome that he advocated the creation of a numerically larger Commonwealth Parliament to handle increased national responsibilities. The States, he predicted, having lost their right to impose income tax would become "mendicants existing upon the bounty of the Commonwealth . . . and for practical purposes will cease to exist as States".[3]

Second readings of the Bills were carried by 41 to 11, many Opposition members voting with the Government, while Blackburn crossed the floor to vote against the Bill with Menzies, McEwen, Cameron and a few others. In the Senate the division was 20 to 12, four of the Opposition voting with the Government.

When the Bills had been passed the only way left to the States to resist the change was to test the validity of the legislation. Four governments were associated in an appeal to the High Court—South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. A possible move in New South Wales by the Labour Premier, McKell, was overruled at the annual State conference of the party, from 13th to 14th June, when an overwhelming majority resolved to support the Commonwealth proposals.

The restraint placed on the Labour Government of New South Wales illustrates the way in which the argument about uniform taxation was complicated for the Labour Party by reason of the fact that they espoused the principle of unification, as contrasted with federation. In the parliamentary debate Calwell had quoted the constitution of the Australian Labour Party to the effect that the Commonwealth Constitution should be amended in order to "invest the Commonwealth Parliament with unlimited legislative powers and authority to create (or re-order) States or Provinces with delegated powers". He wanted the Government to be frank and say that the real intention of the legislation was to establish a "permanent unified system of income taxation".[4]

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[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 171, pp. 1698-1707.
[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 171, p. 1701.

Labour Premiers, and more particularly the Premier of Queensland, Forgan Smith, were more directly concerned over the practical effect on their State expenditures of a pegging of State revenues and wanted to be satisfied on that rather than reminded of party policy on unification. Subsequently the uniform tax incident was alleged as one reason in the resignation of Forgan Smith as Premier on 9th September 1942.[5] He said that the Commonwealth had attempted to dictate to the State, and added: "My breeding and training are such that I will not be a vassal to anyone."[6]

The High Court action, which was treated as a matter of urgency, began on 22nd June and judgment was delivered on 23rd July. By a majority decision the validity of the four Acts was upheld.[7] A major change in constitutional relationships and in the political structure of Australia had been made without any formal amendment of the Constitution.

Another attempt by the Government to obtain additional powers by amendment of the Constitution was also commenced in 1942 by the introduction of the Constitutional Alteration (War Aims and Reconstruction) Bill by Evatt on 1st October.[8] This also met with strong opposition from the States as well as from the political opponents of the Government. The argument is dealt with in a later chapter of this volume, as its subject matter was concerned with the planning of post-war reconstruction, but it should be mentioned here that the controversy surrounding the proposal contributed far more than the uniform taxation measures had done to the growth of concern about the possible use of wartime powers and arrangements to inaugurate lasting socialist or unificationist programmes. The battle over them was joined much more fiercely and resulted in the defeat of the Constitutional proposals at a referendum.[9]

More damaging to the reputation of the Government, however, were the multitude of cases of minor disturbance in the life of the average citizen. This disturbance was accompanied by much fussiness and occasional self-importance. People in a democracy resent more the fact that someone else claims to know best than they resent regulation of their lives.

The chief target of the criticism from the beginning was the Minister for War Organisation of Industry, Dedman. A man of integrity and industry, the Minister was, perhaps unfortunately, rather easily baited. He was also zealous for the right and had no doubt about what was right. He not only made and carried out unpopular decisions on his own account; he did so for other members of the Cabinet and appeared to welcome such tasks shunned by more wary Ministers. It mattered little that in some instances Dedman's department, while instigating restrictions

[5] He was succeeded by Cooper and Hanlon became Treasurer. Forgan Smith did not resign his seat in Parliament until December 1942.

[6] Reported in Brisbane *Worker* editorial, 14 Sep 1942.

[7] South Australia v. Commonwealth, *Commonwealth Law Reports*, Vol 65, p. 373. The majority decision was confirmed fifteen years later in Victoria v. Commonwealth, *Commonwealth Law Reports*, Vol 99, p. 575. For a discussion of the cases and of the growth of the financial power of the Commonwealth, see R. G. Menzies, *Central Power in the Australian Commonwealth*, Chapter 6.

[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 1338.

[9] See Chapter 8 below.

and restraints, was not directly responsible for their administration. In his department a number of economists and other professional men, as well as men brought in from industry, were charged with the rationalisation and reorganisation of industry, and thus the personnel of the department was vulnerable to the sort of popular criticism which derided the work of professional economists or public servants and saw only businessmen as capable of dealing with business.

Dedman presented two reports on his department, one on 29th April and another five months later on 30th September 1942. The first dealt almost entirely with principles, and indeed appeared to derive much from economic theory and academic discussion. There were, he said, two aspects of the task of war organisation:

> In the first place there is the specific duty of setting in motion a transfer of the nation's resources into those uses in which they will go furthest towards victory. For this duty, my department is immediately responsible. . . . In the second place the task of war organisation raises more general questions . . . derived chiefly from the obligations imposed on the Production Executive to maintain a general review of our war commitments in relation to our productive capacity, and of the activities of the various departments concerned in fulfilling those commitments.[1]

Security, he said, prevented report on the second aspect, but of the first he could tell much more. There were three methods available to his department: rationalisation, prohibition of production, and prohibition of employment. Rationalisation promised "eventually the most satisfactory results, though on a comparatively long-term basis" and the department had interviewed manufacturers' representatives, and some two hundred plans had been submitted, covering some ninety different industries. Nevertheless most of what the Minister had to say concerned projected developments: "I must emphasise . . . that most of the plans I shall mention have yet to receive the consideration of the Production Executive, and in many cases important difficulties have still to be cleared up." He described work done in the confectionery industry, and pointed to pharmaceutical products, bicycles, cosmetic and toilet preparations, radio sets, building materials, smallgoods and clothing of all kinds as items for which plans were being made. Other industries where some work had been done towards rationalisation (but through the Department of Supply) were the woollen textile industry and boots and shoes. Concentration of manufacture in one or two factories, as had been attempted in the United Kingdom, had merely been studied. The Minister seized the opportunity, however, to point to possible profit adjustments which could attend such concentration.

Banking rationalisation was planned, but, on a note of annoyance, the Minister admitted that such branches as had been closed had been at the instigation of the banks themselves, and not on the plans of his department. Zoning systems for milk and bread supplies, and to some extent of meat, were noted and justified. Rationalisation might mean that the use of brands and trade marks would be affected. This was regrettable,

[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 608.

but, said the Minister, "I shall not hesitate to move in every case for the most effective rationalisation plan, irrespective of the interests of particular firms in product-markings of one kind or another."[2]

Prohibition of production was dealt with more briefly. "The great virtue of the outright prohibition of the production of specified articles is the speed with which the restriction can be imposed." In this way the Minister justified his order prohibiting cosmetic manufacture so as to conserve scarce supplies of oils and chemicals wanted by the Medical Equipment Control Committee. Application of early prohibitions to South Australia and Victoria only was justified because manpower shortages existed in those States; extension of the prohibition to other States depended on reports from the Minister for Labour and National Service on the manpower position there. For similar reasons, the control of building, effected earlier by capital issues control, had come from the Treasury to War Organisation of Industry.

The third method, prohibition of employment, had been applied in South Australia chiefly; there a large number of women were wanted for munitions factories.

All three methods were directed towards releasing resources for other and more essential purposes, and because the need to do so was indisputable and the course was one which the country expected the Government to follow, the Opposition's comment on the Government's actions was hampered. They could direct their complaints only to omissions, or to misuse of powers.

The position was rather different five months later when the Minister made his September statement. As before, Dedman was given a good hearing, but his speech revealed a tendency to excuse and justify where before he had been unhesitating and emphatic. One reason for this, of course, was the cumulative effect of five months of criticism. At the door of his department had been laid the responsibility and blame for buying rushes before the introduction of clothes rationing in June, for the "quota-sold" period, and for the inadequate administrative arrangements for the introduction of the scheme. Most of the press held up to ridicule the department's attempts at simplified clothing styles, which were intended to save manpower in the clothing industries.

In his September statement Dedman quoted figures of manpower diverted to war—only 200,000 people now making for the civil population; 500,000 making munitions and other war supplies. He then proceeded to emphasise the activities of the department in the realm of coordination, its work as the Production Executive secretariat, as the instigator of the inter-departmental committee on manpower commitments, its association with the Australian Clothing Council and the work of various coordination committees for individual products and the Australian Food Council. These he mentioned because they were "sometimes overlooked by those who imagine that our only job is to impose restrictions".[3]

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[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 612.
[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 1197.

On the progress of the department's rationalisation plans he had to admit that those formally approved and implemented covered only gold mining, packaging, bread and milk deliveries, standardisation of clothing materials, retail deliveries, dry cleaning, veterinary remedies, stock foods and stock licks, simplification of meals, standardisation of clothing styles and the standardisation of footwear. The department had perforce to accept voluntary schemes in most industries, and of these he admitted that "still more varieties could be eliminated and production concentrated in fewer firms".

> But it has been found that after a certain point the difficulties and time required for rationalisation rise sharply. Greater results can, therefore, be obtained in a short time if a reasonable amount of rationalisation is spread over a wide range of industry, than if time is taken to cross the t's and dot the i's in each industry before passing to the next.[4]

He concluded with a list of the staff of the department, a tribute to their zeal, and a firm denial of allegations that the department favoured big business. On the contrary they were concerned about, and seeking to alleviate the plight of, for instance, the small retail shop pushed out of business by wartime difficulties. It was clear that the Minister's statement was designed to refute the many critics of the Minister and of the department. "Like everyone else I want to win the war. Unlike some other people, I am prepared to take the action which is necessary if we are to have a chance of winning it."

Spooner, who had been Minister for War Organisation of Industry during the department's brief life under the former Government, had asked a question on rationalisation some days before the Minister's statement, and he led the reply to the statement, as he had done to the earlier one. His chief complaint was that the Minister had failed to inform the House on the progress of many of the projected developments described in the earlier statement. The vaunted rationalisation schemes had had to give way to voluntary schemes, and "the only result of real value" secured by W.O.I. had been where appeals to industry had resulted in their releasing material and manpower for the national use. He doubted whether any substantial saving would come from the "Victory" suit which had been part of the department's scheme of standardising clothing, and concluded with a strong appeal to the government to tax the lower incomes which, in his view, represented the increased spending power which was responsible for the competition for scarce commodities.

From September onwards the attack on restrictions and prohibitions, more especially those associated with the Department of War Organisation of Industry was launched, and the uncompromising attitude of the Minister, and the extension of the department's activities, were to provide plenty of scope for attack. This was a phase of governmental activity in which ridicule came easily and ridicule is the easiest form of political persuasion. Moreover any protest against regulation and regimentation in the hands of a bureaucracy was also likely to have political appeal. Added to this,

[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 1198.

the demeanour of those concerned with these governmental activities was such as to invite both the ridicule and the protest. In retrospect, criticism by politicians and the press of the Minister and Department of War Organisation of Industry seems often unfair and ill-founded but it is easily understandable that criticism took such forms.

By September when Parliament came together to consider the Budget, rationing of clothing had been in force for two months; the enemy had continued his sporadic raids on Darwin, there had been a submarine raid on Sydney, and some shelling of Newcastle; but his southward advance appeared to have halted, no one knew for how long, and Australian troops in New Guinea were working doggedly to prepare an offensive. And in Brisbane on 2nd September the Prime Minister made his impassioned appeal for a period of austerity in Australian living standards.

The 1942-43 Budget revealed that war expenditure for 1941-42 had reached £319,511,000, £98,001,000 more than the estimate and £149,273,000 more than expenditure for the previous year. This had been financed by £108,635,000 in taxes, £126,852,000 in loans and War Savings Certificates, £5,596,000 temporary use of Treasury balances, and £78,428,000 of Treasury bills. In the year three war loans raised in Australia had provided £119,873,000 and, whereas in the previous year £64,000,000 of public loans involved assistance from the trading banks, this £119,873,000 had needed no such aid; in addition there had been conversions of over £66,000,000. War Savings certificates, however, were below the figure for the previous year.

For the forthcoming year, war expenditure was set at £440,000,000, other expenditure at £109,000,000. The Commonwealth proposed to re-enter the entertainments tax field, which the States had agreed to vacate on the condition that the Commonwealth reimbursed them. With this, and additional customs and excise it was hoped that revenue would reach £249,000,000, leaving £300,000,000 to be financed. At least £200,000,000 of this, said the Treasurer, was expected from loans. "There are some people who think that the war should be financed entirely by central bank credit. The Government is convinced that in that way lies grave danger."[5] Direct controls, prohibitions, restrictions, must be continued and increased if necessary in the attempt to transfer excess spending power to the Government in order to pay the fighting forces and for labour and materials used in production of munitions and war supplies. Inflation was an ever present danger when the volume of money increased without increased supplies of goods for civil consumption.

As part of the Government's financial policy a mortgage bank would be established with the Commonwealth Bank; mortgage interest was pegged at 5 per cent. "Black market" operations were causing concern, and regulations would be issued to impose minimum penalties for "it has been found that in a large number of cases magistrates have imposed penalties

[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 28.

which are quite inadequate to meet the gravity of the offence".[6] The Treasurer concluded by sketching plans for post-war reconstruction and referred to the need for the Commonwealth Parliament to have full powers for this purpose.

The ensuing debate was as discursive as most budget discussions. The Opposition, following Fadden's lead, concentrated on the gap of £300,000,000 and argued that the voluntary response from the people which was now before the Government should convince them that the voluntary system had failed. In particular they quoted the figures for War Savings Certificates. Labour views against the compulsory raising of money would have to undergo a radical change. They complained of the incidence of taxation. Taxation should be extended to lower incomes. A scheme of post-war credits should be adopted. Inflation was being allowed to grow.

But there was no fire in the Opposition attack. On the morning of the 23rd a weary House heard the Treasurer's reply, after an all-night sitting. Chifley said that the Opposition had not indicated to what degree it would apply its policy of compulsory loans and post-war credits. Despite comparisons with Great Britain only between £40,000,000 and £45,000,000 would be raised by post-war credits if a similar scale were applied in Australia. Every country was faced with the problem now confronting Australia. The Government was well aware of the danger of inflation; it had adopted consumer and supply rationing and would continue such steps in order to give effect to its policy.

3—THE CONSCRIPTION ISSUE

The decisions of the Menzies Government in September 1939 for the formation of the Second A.I.F. and for the calling up of men for the Citizen Military Forces (C.M.F., also referred to as the Militia) had respected the traditional distinction between an expeditionary force which was wholly composed of volunteers and a home defence force in which men could be compelled to serve. In June 1939 an amendment of the *Defence Act* had placed beyond doubt the liability of the home defence force to serve in the mandated territory of New Guinea and in Papua as well as on the mainland of Australia.[7]

This distinction between the expeditionary force and the militia was practical until Japan entered the war. Within a few months the enemy was fighting on Australian territory, part of the A.I.F. had returned to Australia and the A.I.F. and C.M.F. were engaged on common tasks. Because it was necessary to bring the C.M.F. quickly to full war establishment, all transfers of men from the C.M.F. to the A.I.F.—a means of recruitment which had been providing a steadily increasing proportion of the A.I.F. volunteers—was suspended. In other words, volunteers were compelled

[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 30.

[7] See *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p. 164, for Ward's bill in September 1939 which sought to exclude New Guinea.

to stay in the C.M.F. Not only was the transfer of volunteers from the C.M.F. suspended but the process was reversed by the posting of surplus A.I.F. reinforcements from training depots to C.M.F. units, the numbers of the A.I.F. serving with the C.M.F rising to 10,000 in April and 17,250 in June 1942. Thus the distinction between the two forces was blurred both by the tasks they were allotted and by their organisation. The fact of the blurring is further evidenced by the passionate and successful claims of the A.I.F. men to retain their distinctiveness with a grey border to their colour patches and the name plate "Australia" on their shoulders.

At the same time Australians were receiving a dramatic lesson that "home defence" might begin to crumble at points far outside home territory. As the months passed and the Japanese advance was checked, Australians could also see that the final repulse and defeat of the invader could not be achieved on home territory but only by defeating him at the bases from which he launched his attack and later by pursuing and smashing him wherever he could be hit hardest.

Thus there emerged organisational and strategical arguments for removing the distinction between the two forces and of reconsidering the limits set by the *Defence Act* on the use of the C.M.F. Against these arguments there might be placed good military and historical examples in favour of still retaining a volunteer army of "regulars" for service abroad and a militia at home. Furthermore, as will be seen below, limits of manpower as well as the *Defence Act* would govern the number of men who could go abroad.

The issue did not, however, have the logical simplicity of a problem in organisation and strategy. To appreciate the various other influences which played upon the question it is necessary to trace its emergence into the forefront of politics.

As early as 17th December 1941 the Leader of the Opposition, Fadden, wrote to Curtin giving him the opinion, arrived at by a meeting of the Opposition parties on that day, "that it is all-important to create an Australian Army for the defence of the Commonwealth which the Government can employ anywhere without any statutory restrictions whatsoever", and offering to give unanimous support to a measure amending the *National Security Act* "in such a manner as to enable the Government to employ any of our troops in any area vitally necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth".

This was a clear proposal for conscription for overseas service. At that time the battlefronts were still in the Malayan peninsula and the Philippines. Fadden's letter makes the intention clear:

> Malaya and the Pacific Islands are as truly part of Australia's defences as are our own coastal ports. In our opinion the Government must be able to employ as it may wish, and as the necessity demands, any Australian troops anywhere, be they voluntarily enlisted or raised under the *Defence Act*. As the law stands at present, it would be impossible to reinforce the sister Dominion of New Zealand, or even to send troops to Timor, other than Australian Imperial Force personnel.

It was also a proposal to introduce conscription by action of Parliament

and the Executive and to do so by removing from the *National Security Act* the limits which had been expressly introduced by the Menzies Government early in the war as a pledge to the people of Australia that there would be no conscription for overseas service:

> Swift action may be necessary (Fadden's letter continued) and it appears to us that whilst Parliament is still in session the opportunity should be taken to amend the act so that the Government will not find itself hampered by lack of power, but may by regulation as it thinks fit meet a situation which we all hope will not arise.[8]

In subsequent parliamentary debates Opposition speakers denied that they were advocating conscription and made the fine point that they were only proposing to remove the legal impediments which would prevent the Government from meeting all contingencies. They also denied, perhaps with too much protestation, that they had any political motives or any wish to do anything except assist the Government.

Curtin did not reply to Fadden's letter so Fadden raised the question again at a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 6th January 1942. The minute reads:

> The Prime Minister said that this was a matter for consideration by Parliament, as it affected existing legislation. It involved important questions of policy, which would be reviewed by Cabinet before the next session.[9]

At this time Fadden appears to have been thinking less of sending reinforcements to Malaya than of moving troops out to adjacent islands, such as New Caledonia, to meet the oncoming foe. When regard is paid to the land forces available in Australia at that time, his argument must stand or fall solely on a military judgment. If it were a sound military disposition of limited forces to send a substantial body of troops to adjacent islands then militia would have to be sent. At that time the total number of A.I.F. in Australia, including recent enlistments, was only 37,500,[10] a large proportion of whom were concentrated in one specialist formation, the 1st Armoured Division.

In the light of later events, the military judgment would certainly be strongly against Fadden. The contemporary military judgment would also have been against him. The Government's military advisers were against dispersal and in favour of concentration in the defence of vital areas and, a month later, they were to present to the Government the so-called "Brisbane Line" proposal.

In any case Curtin did not judge the suggestion as a piece of defence planning. He suspected that it was an attempt to score political advantage. Certainly, if Curtin had acted as the Opposition proposed he should act in December 1941 and early January 1942, he would at that time and in the circumstances have encountered great opposition inside his own party from those who held firmly to the traditional anti-conscriptionist views and possibly Labour would have split once again on that issue. On

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[8] For full text of letter see *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 788-99.
[9] Advisory War Council Minute 663, 6 Jan 1942.
[10] War Cabinet Agendum 13/1942. Weekly Progress Report by Chief of the General Staff.

the other hand, if he did not act on the suggestion, the Opposition could claim, and in fact did claim, to be more resolute and realistic in the defence of Australia than the Government was.

In retrospect, knowing now how swiftly events moved after December 1941, it was well for the nation that Curtin did not do as Fadden suggested. There was no leisure to engage in great controversies which might split the foundations of the Government.

In the ensuing months there was a certain comic dexterity about the way in which both Government and Opposition claimed the merits of conscription and avoided the responsibility for it. During this period there was an increasing amount of comment in the newspapers in favour of "one army". Scarcely anyone spoke of conscription; many argued persuasively for merging the A.I.F. and the C.M.F. into a single force, with the implication that any part of that force could be used wherever military necessity required. In discussion of one army, both at this stage and later, a variety of arguments were used. Some of these arguments related to such relatively insignificant matters as that, although militiamen and A.I.F. men were now doing much the same sort of duty in Australia, the militiamen were taxed on their pay and the A.I.F. were not. The A.I.F. had "wet" canteens and militiamen were "dry". The militiamen were not credited with deferred pay and their entitlement to pensions was less certain. The A.I.F. men wore the "Australia" badge and the militiamen did not. The A.I.F. were confident in their superiority and proud of their distinctive patches and personal numbers and, however keen and efficient the militiaman was, he still suffered under the distinctions made between the two forces. These distinctions were felt strongly not only because it was thought that the militia was now doing the same work as the A.I.F. but also because a number of the officers and other ranks of the militia had in fact volunteered for overseas service but had not been allowed to leave their militia units.

When the Government amended the disparity in regard to pay and some of the other privileges in March 1942 by permitting deferred pay for the A.M.F. (retrospective to 7th December 1941), by allowing wet canteens in all Australian military camps, by free postage for the A.M.F. serving in New Guinea, by replacing regimental and corps badges in the A.M.F. with the "rising sun", and removing anomalies in travel concessions, the argument switched to the plea that as the two forces were much the same why not make them one force? Coupled with the superficial differences between the units there was a difference rooted in the pride of the A.I.F. in its own achievements and a tendency to despise the "Chocos" (chocolate soldiers) of the militia as being of less account in warfare.

Other arguments related to organisation. In training, in operations, in the reinforcement or the regrouping of units, and in the general administration of the land forces, it was argued, there would be more advantage in having a single force composed of men enlisted under identical conditions than in having two distinct forces. This organisational argument led to

the edge of the problem of overseas service when its proponents argued to absurdity and asked what would happen when the Japanese were being driven out of Australian territory and one group of soldiers would say, in the middle of the advance: "This is where we stop."

The expectation of an "offensive strategy" which accompanied the creation of the South-West Pacific Command and the designation of MacArthur as Supreme Commander, coupled with the action of the Australian Government in placing all its land forces under his control, brought this side of the discussion to the front.

Whereas there had formerly been a G.O.C., Home Forces, and a G.O.C., A.I.F., there was now, in April 1942, one Commander-in-Chief, Blamey, who was also Commander of Allied Land Forces. All land forces had been assigned to the South-West Pacific Command. With the exception of the 9th Division in the Middle East and most of the 6th Division in Ceylon, practically the whole of the Australian land forces were in Australia, the proportions being about 96,000 A.I.F. to 280,000 militia. The operational units were engaged in common tasks and the militia was proving its mettle.

Early in April it appeared as though the mind of the Government itself was moving towards "one army". An Australian Broadcasting Commission broadcast of 7th April, much quoted in subsequent controversy, ascribed to a "high Government authority" a statement to the effect that MacArthur could send troops wherever they were needed. A press paragraph of the same date claimed that it could be authoritatively stated that the Government would regard any territories occupied by Australian forces for the purposes of resisting Japan as "territories of Australia for the purposes of the *Defence Act*".[1] Were these trial balloons?

In Parliament, Opposition members who had been constantly questioning the Government about its intentions[2] and urging that it should show an "offensive" spirit used the broadcast as a peg for more questions. Questions were also asked by the Labour members, Calwell and Brennan. Curtin denied that the statement had been authorised or that the Government had any new policy.[3] The asking of these questions on 29th April, three weeks after the broadcast, would appear to have been linked with a discussion that had taken place in the Advisory War Council on the previous day. The minute of the Council reads:

> A discussion took place on the question of the liability of the A.M.F. to serve outside Australia. Reference was made to the position arising from the assignment of Australian Military Forces to the Supreme Command, South-West Pacific Area, and to the fact that A.I.F. personnel had been allotted to A.M.F. units. The Prime Minister said that the matter could not be decided on any other ground than that of strategic necessity and would be considered by the Government on this basis when the need arose.[4]

The Opposition decided to force the political issue in Parliament,

[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 798-9.
[2] Vol 170, pp. 19, 21, 307, 479, 573-4.
[3] Vol 170, pp. 594-5.
[4] Advisory War Council Minute 914, 28 Apr 1942.

disclaiming all political motives while they did it. The military situation when they made this second move was vastly different from what it had been when Fadden had written to Curtin in December. Except in Timor, the only fighting in which Australian land forces were now engaged against the Japanese was in Australian territory and, in spite of any offensive strategy, was likely to remain there for some months. The total land forces in Australia were over 400,000, including Americans, yet of those Australians in units classed as "operational" only 57,526 were A.I.F. and 187,986 were A.M.F.

In the House of Representatives on 1st May Fadden, resuming an international affairs debate, moved an amendment which would have converted the formal motion for the printing of the statement on international affairs into a declaration by the House "that, in order that the Australian Imperial Force and the Australian Military Forces may be effectively welded into one fighting army available for offence as well as defence, this House is of the opinion that all territorial limitations upon the power of the Commonwealth Government to employ the Australian Military Forces should be removed". Fadden developed his main argument as follows:

> All of us know that, within recent months, and particularly within recent weeks, defence strategy in Australia has been developed on the basis of offensive action. It is universally recognised that the war cannot be won in Australia. All of us hope that the fight for the eventual destruction of our enemies will take place as far as possible from our own territories. If offence is to be the policy and the objective of our military advisers, surely we cannot have an army, one section of which would be available for defensive action in Australia and offensive action beyond it, and another section for defensive action only in Australia! How could there be a merging of the forces without a chaotic condition developing should the necessity arise for action to be taken outside Australia? The defensive frontier of Australia is not Darwin, Hobart or Fremantle; it may be anywhere in the adjacent islands. It may be in New Zealand, New Caledonia or the Netherlands East Indies.

Yet he put this argument in a frame of political caution. The Opposition, he said, was not advocating that the militia should be sent "anywhere". It was not advocating that it should be sent out of Australia. It was only putting the view "that the existing legal impediments must be removed in order that any plans which the Government may consider are necessary in order to meet a contingency may be expeditiously implemented in accordance with the advice of those who are competent to form a sound judgment".

Although Fadden professed a desire only to help the Government without any political motives whatsoever, Curtin thought his motion was purely a political move. At the close of a speech in which he was constantly heckled by the Opposition, he dubbed Fadden's proposal the work "of a few disappointed politicians who seek an issue upon which to rehabilitate themselves".

Beyond that basic suspicion of a political motive, the arguments which Curtin and his supporters raised were chiefly that voluntary enlistment had not yet failed to provide sufficient men to fight for Australia overseas

in the navy, army and air force; in the absence of naval and aerial superiority in Australia and in lack of shipping all talk of taking the offensive at the present stage of the war was meaningless; that, at present, ability to organise, equip and despatch naval and air forces to meet the enemy was a far more valuable strategical conception than any redisposition of the land forces and, because of lack of naval and air strength, the Government was obliged, instead of calling up men for military service in distant theatres, to keep them at home for the defence of the country. Australia had to use the maximum of its resources to resist enemies who might invade Australian soil.

The reply of the Opposition to the last of Curtin's arguments was that the merging of the two forces and making the unified force available for service outside Australia was a necessary piece of planning for a later phase of the war. Menzies reminded the House that Australia could escape invasion and still lose the war. Australia's prime significance in the war was as a base from which ultimately blows might be delivered against enemy territory. The forces in Australia, both American and Australian, were provided and organised not only for defence but also for an offensive. He found it "a denial of every military principle" to have forces so organised that within an army corps under one commander, there would be one division that could go abroad and another division of which one brigade had to stay at home.

During this debate the central issue was made the merging of the two forces into one army and, although the conscription of men for overseas service would be consequential on the proposals, most of the speakers on both sides avoided explicit reference to that topic. There were, however, a few explicit references by Labour speakers. "The opposition of the Labour Party to the sending of troops abroad for service, unless the troops volunteer, has not been changed," said Drakeford. Blackburn rejoiced that the Government was "nailing its colours to the mast" and standing by "the traditional policy of the party".[5] It was apparent, too, that the broadcast of 7th April had caused some misgivings among Labour supporters. Calwell considered it a "perfectly legitimate deduction" that higher government circles thought that at some time or another when the troops moved northward there should be conscription for overseas service. He hoped there would be no more statements of that kind.[6]

Fadden's amendment was defeated by 31 to 27, the two Independents supporting the Government. Assuming that it had been agreed to and that the Government had tried to act in accordance with it, it would appear that the immediate effects would have been political disruption rather than military benefit.

From this point an effective change was wrought more quietly than by public debate. On 14th May 1942 the Minister for the Army, Forde, announced that militiamen would in future be allowed to enlist in the

[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 818 and 811.
[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 846.

A.I.F.[7] These volunteers although attaining A.I.F. status and wearing the distinguishing badges of the A.I.F. remained posted to C.M.F. units unless or until they were required for posting to a unit of the A.I.F. and they did not join A.I.F. training depots.

In the succeeding months a steady transference of men to the A.I.F. by voluntary enlistment proceeded, and at the end of July it was decided that where 75 per cent of the strength of a C.M.F. unit volunteered for service in the A.I.F. that unit should be classified as an A.I.F. unit. Members of a C.M.F. unit who were not accepted or who did not volunteer for the A.I.F. would not be withdrawn to depots immediately, but they would be withdrawn in the event of a unit being required to proceed overseas.[8]

On 9th May 1942 the strength of the Australian land forces in Australia and New Guinea was 384,975, composed of 95,897 in the A.I.F. units and 289,078 in the C.M.F. (including 14,400 men of the A.I.F. serving with the C.M.F.). Cumulative totals of voluntary transfers from C.M.F. to A.I.F. were 29,880 at 8th August; 54,874 by 5th September; 78,398 by 3rd October and 83,568 at the end of the month. At 31st October 1942 the total of Australian land forces was 433,579 (171,246 A.I.F. and 262,333 C.M.F.).[9]

The transfer by voluntary enlistment from the A.M.F. to the A.I.F. was accompanied during 1942 by some protests from Labour parliamentarians that undue pressure was sometimes used by officers to induce men to volunteer, and requests to the Government to see that such pressure was prevented, but to the act of volunteering for overseas service there was no objection.

When Parliament resumed in September, after having been in recess since May, the Opposition renewed its criticism of the Government. Their arguments now stressed such points as that the pay, exemptions and privileges of both forces were the same and that therefore their obligations should be made the same; that it was "unfair" to Australia's allies to withhold part of the Australian forces from service overseas; that the Americans had sent conscripts overseas to help defend Australia but Australia would not conscript her own men to go overseas; that the troops would be happier and morale would be lifted if they were made into one fighting force; that economy would be served by amalgamation.

Others, using the weapon of ridicule, spoke of a "shandy-gaff army", consisting of soldiers who would fight anywhere the Japanese were located and others who were forbidden by law to do so; and they referred to the militia as "Koalas" because they were not to be shot at and they were

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 28, p. 23. See also No. 30, p. 14, No. 33, p. 8 and No. 35, p. 3.

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 35, p. 3.

[9] The tendency shown by these figures continued throughout the remainder of the war. The cumulative totals of transfers from C.M.F. to A.I.F. were 181,000 at 31st December 1943; 200,143 at 31st December 1944; and 205,374 at the end of the war. The result of this was that, in the end, the A.I.F. was preponderantly a body of transferred militiamen. The totals of Australian land forces in Australia and New Guinea were 437,999 at 30th January 1943 (223,721 A.I.F. and 214,278 C.M.F.); 466,593 at 31st May 1943, after the return of the 9th Division (289,016 A.I.F. and 177,577 C.M.F.); and 437,905 in January 1944 (319,308 A.I.F. and 118,597 C.M.F.).

not to be exported. Behind some of the speeches was the clear implication that the Government, by failing to change the conditions, was less resolute in its patriotism than the Opposition.

In October the controversy became sharper. The Minister for the Army, Forde, made statements both in the House and in the press to the effect that the Government could be relied upon to honour all its military obligations; that there was no necessity for conscription as there were a far greater number of men in the A.I.F. than at any previous time.

After Parliament had adjourned on 9th October the controversy continued in the press. On 18th October Fadden accused a substantial section of the Labour Party of being unwilling or afraid to face the war situation and, in the following week, he criticised Forde for his "evasive replies to every demand that the A.I.F. and the militia should be merged into one Army". Referring to the presence of both A.I.F. and C.M.F. men in some formations, he foretold that disorganisation would occur if ever these formations were needed to serve outside Australia. Again on 27th October he declared that "the Government's refusal to merge the A.I.F. and the militia into one fighting force which could go anywhere would ignore the friendship and understanding between the United States and Australia".[10]

Forde replied on the 26th that the Government was opposed to conscription for overseas service and the introduction of the issue at that particular period did a great disservice to Australia. He accused Fadden of playing party politics. The Opposition, Forde said, believed that there was one issue which would certainly split the Labour Party and divide the people of Australia and they were trying to raise that issue at a time when unity was a paramount necessity. He repeated that the members of the militia were voluntarily transferring to the A.I.F. at a rate four times greater than that of enlistments in the A.I.F. when the Fadden Government went out of office, and there was less need today of conscription than at any previous time. He concluded: "The Government will not be stampeded by the foolish clamour of political opportunists."[1]

At the very time at which Forde spoke Curtin must have been turning over in his mind plans for a change. His decision to seek the change would appear to have been made quickly, privately and without the knowledge of his colleagues. There had been rumours, but in the Senate the Leader of the Government, Senator Collings, had stated categorically on 8th October that any report that the Government would refer the question of conscription to the next Australian Labour Party Conference was untrue.[2] A pamphlet issued by the Victorian branch of the party on 2nd November in commendation of the Government's record in office repeated the earlier Ministerial statements and gave no hint of change.[3] Contemporary publications by opponents of the change speak of Curtin's

[10] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19, 25 and 28 Oct 1942.
[1] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Oct 1942.
[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 1549.
[3] *Twelve Months of Labour Rule—What the Government Led by the Rt Hon John Curtin Has Accomplished.* Issued by the Australian Labour Party (Victoria), 1942, pp. 11-12.



WOUNDED IN ACTION.

"Gout? No; I dropped a brick on it!"

Scorfield in Bulletin *(Sydney) 19 Apr 1944*

A cartoon representative of the tendency in the Press to ridicule Forde, Minister for the Army.

move as "unexpected".[4] Holloway, Minister for Social Services and Health, was quoted as saying that he had no inkling of what Mr Curtin intended to do and "he was sure most of the party members were equally taken by surprise".[5]

Curtin launched his proposal without formal notice on the second day of a Special Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party held in Melbourne from 16th November. He was attending the conference not as Prime Minister but as one of the six delegates from Western Australia. He had returned from a visit to Western Australia direct to the conference. At the evening session on the 16th he had moved a resolution reaffirming the adherence of the conference to "complete and indissoluble unity with our Allies in the war for freedom", expressing gratitude to the fighting forces and pledging "its determination to stand with them in resisting aggression and to bear willingly the burdens and perils involved in the struggle". The official report of his speech reviewing the war effort and exhorting the people to stand together, reveals no reference to the conscription issue.

On the following afternoon, as chairman of the War and War Effort Committee appointed by the conference, he presented the customary report on the agenda items listed under that heading and secured their adoption. Then Mr O'Flaherty,[6] of South Australia, seconded by Mr J. Reid, of Queensland, moved that further consideration of committee reports be adjourned "to enable Mr Curtin to make a statement on high strategy". In the course of that statement Curtin presented the arguments in favour of "one army". In doing so he pointed out that the C.M.F. could not fight in Dutch New Guinea and in Timor. The official report of the conference continues:

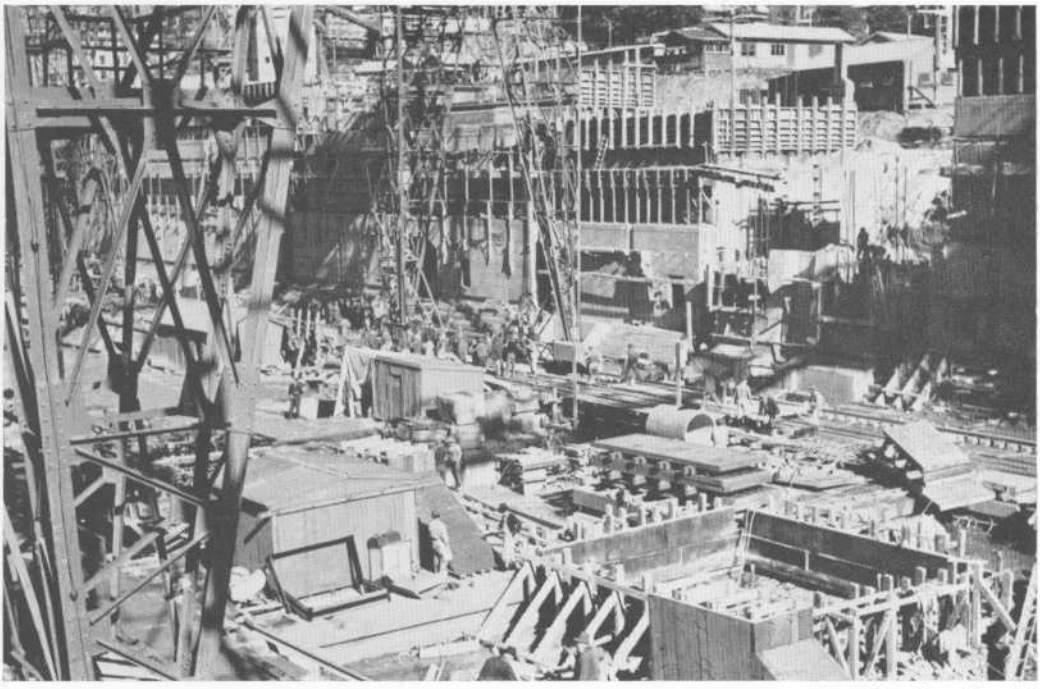
> To send troops outside Australia meant tearing battle-seasoned divisions into fragments and re-forming, thereby losing *esprit de corps* and team spirit. From the operational and organisational standpoints a homogeneous Australian Army was, beyond dispute, necessary. The *Repatriation Act* created anomalies as between the A.I.F. and the A.M.F. Some A.M.F. had been in action, but would not receive the same benefits as A.I.F., who, although enlisted for overseas, had not seen service. There had been 83,000 volunteers from the A.M.F. to the A.I.F. but an extension of that number was not wanted because it was not desirable to break up A.M.F. divisions. There was no argument against one army. The minimum set for Australian

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[4] Maurice Blackburn, *Our Last Stand*, and H. E. Boote, *Conscription Must Be Rejected*, reprinted as Chapter 2 in K. J. Kenafick, *Maurice Blackburn and the No-Conscription Campaign in the Second World War* (1949).

[5] Quoted in John McKellar, *Maurice Blackburn and the Struggle for Freedom* (1945), p. 12. See also Susan Blackburn, *Maurice Blackburn and the Australian Labour Party, 1934-1943* (1969). Further confirmation of this reading of the events came after it had been written. Writing in *Politics*, Vol III, No. 2, November 1968, John Dedman, a member of the Curtin Ministry, said (p. 152): "The first open breach in Cabinet solidarity arose towards the end of 1942 when the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, sought from a Special Federal Conference of the A.L.P. permission to amend the *Defence Act* to allow of members of the militia forces being used in areas outside but adjacent to Australia. The week after Conference had referred the matter to State Executives, the Prime Minister informed Cabinet of the reasons why he had made this approach. Three Ministers—Holloway, Ward and Cameron—took strong exception to his action but, since the matter was now *sub judice*, no definitive decision was taken." From this account it might be suggested that Curtin's tactical skill may have been shown both in going direct to the Conference and in obtaining from Conference a decision to refer the matter to the State Executives of the Party so that, while it was under reference, Cabinet and the Caucus were restricted in their right to criticise or oppose his action.

[6] S. W. O'Flaherty. Member of Federal Executive ALP 1942-49; Senator 1944-62. B. Silverton, NSW, 2 Sep 1886.



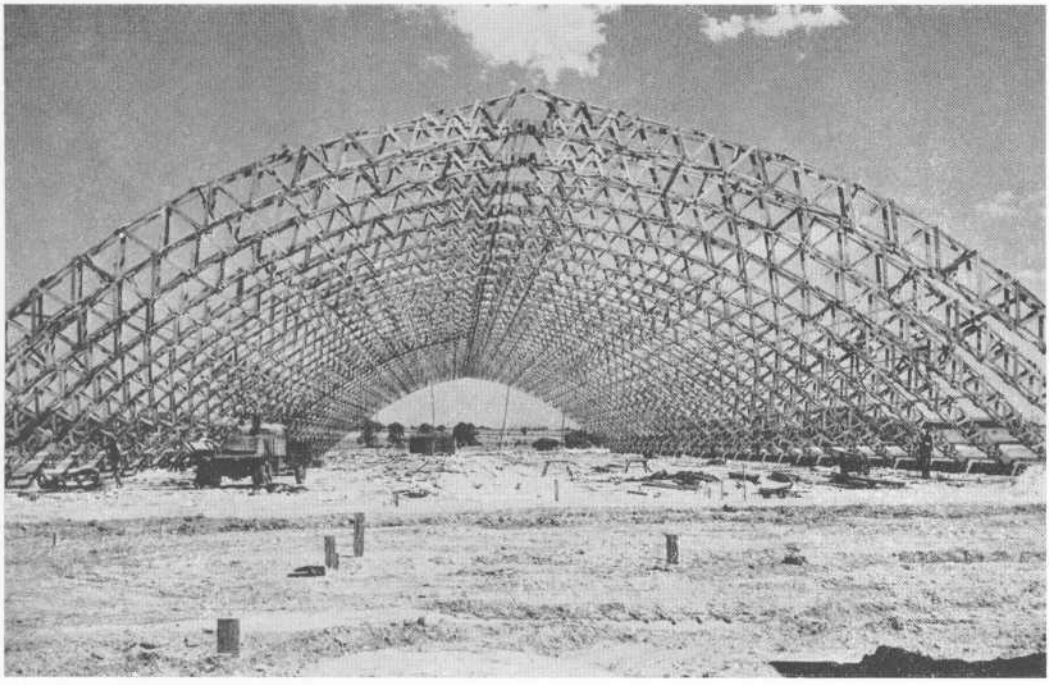
Australian War Memorial

A view of a section of the Captain Cook Graving Dock, Sydney, on which work was begun in August 1940 and completed early in 1945 under the direction of the Allied Works Council. It was officially opened on 24th March 1945 by the Duke of Gloucester. The Allied Works Council was established in February 1942 to carry out the construction of defence works.



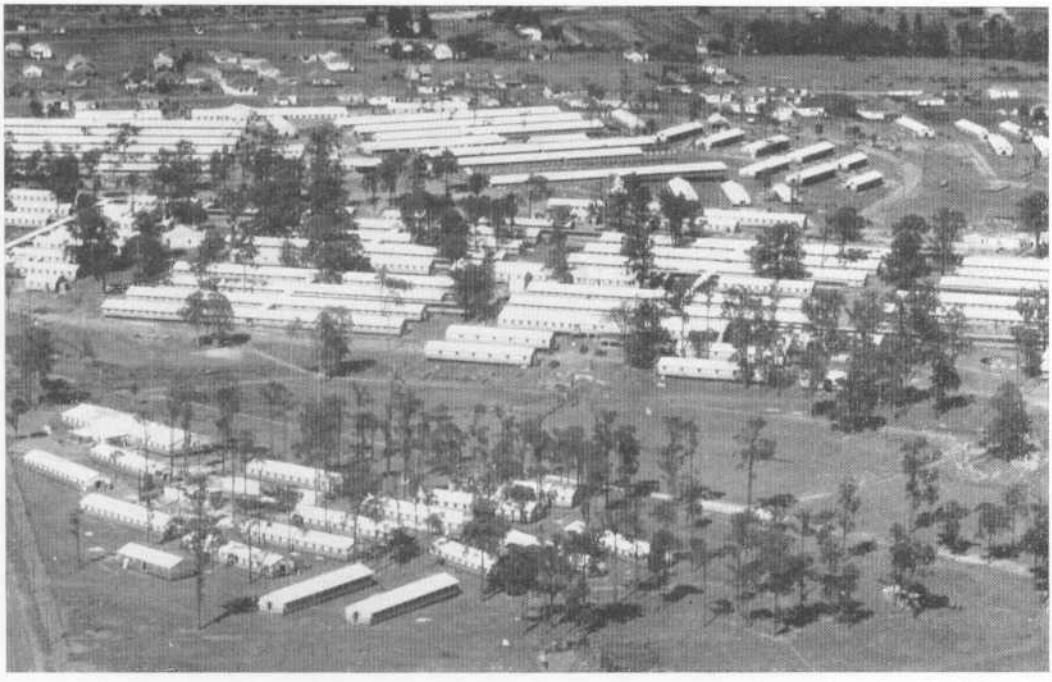
Australian War Memorial

Civil Constructional Corps workers bitumen sealing a portion of the north-south road (Stuart Highway) in the Northern Territory.



Australian War Memorial

An ordnance store under construction by the Allied Works Council for American forces in Australia.



Australian War Memorial

Aerial view of a 4,250-bed hospital constructed by the Allied Works Council for the American forces.

operations was a further three divisions. Further there had to be periodical relief of the force in New Guinea. The significance of Timor in respect of north-west Australia could not be denied. He asked conference for a definition of what were the territories of the Commonwealth for the purposes of defence and for political administration and proposed that the following be added to the *Defence Act*: "and such other territories in the south-west Pacific area as the Governor-General proclaims to be in the South-West Pacific area. . . ." He asked delegates to consider what he had said, and he would bring the matter forward next day.[7]

Calwell, representing Victoria, at once objected that the matter was not properly before conference as there was no resolution on it from any State branch, the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party or the Federal Executive of the party. The Chairman, Fallon, deferred the point of order until the matter was again raised.

At the morning session on the 18th Curtin was called upon and, after a further point of order had been raised against him, introduced the subject by moving that he be given leave to move a motion in the following terms:

> That, having regard to the paramount necessity of Australia's defence, as set out in Section 5 of the special resolution adopted in June 1940 by Federal Conference, the Government be authorised to add to the *Defence Act*, in the definition of the Commonwealth which at present defines the territories to which this Act extends, the following words: "and such other territories in the South-West Pacific Area as the Governor-General proclaims as being territories associated with the defence of Australia."[8]

Curtin's arguments, so far as the official report does justice to them, were that the change was a strategical necessity, that Australia owed it to her Allies to fight beyond Australia (or to send in service troops to relieve Allied forces in re-occupied territory), and that it was the only way to make the *Repatriation Act* cover the men of the C.M.F. It would appear, too, that in asking for overseas service for the Australian troops, he had in mind a limited operational role for them. The official report reads, in part:

> He had opposed participation by Australia in overseas wars all his life, and he did not now ask for that, but that the definition of Australian territory be extended to cover areas vital to Australia. If the war went well, the United States forces would go north and those forces must be replaced by Australian forces in areas not now Australian territory. The U.S. had saved Australia, and the Government had had a desperate fight to get aid for Australia. He did not want to live those months again. Now the position was that a barrage of criticism in Australia and the United States was directed at Australia that it would have Americans defend Darwin, but not Australians fight for the Philippines. He was asking conference to make certain that islands outside the political administration of Australia but strategically vital to Australia, should be denied to the enemy by the strength Australia could put there. Because of the debt of gratitude owed to the United States, Australia should be able to say that Australian resources would go on with them and maintain supplies and bases to them from islands close to Australia which, if not held, could be bases for the enemy to attack the United States forces.[9]

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[7] *Official Report of Proceedings of Special Commonwealth Conferences held at Melbourne on Monday, November 16, 1942 [and following days] and Monday, January 4, 1943 [and following days]*, p. 28.

[8] Official Report, p. 32.

[9] Official Report, p. 32.

Calwell at once re-stated his point of order, asking whether a delegate could move a "motion affecting the platform and rules of the party" when no motion relating to the subject appeared on the agenda paper. Fallon ruled that a vote of two-thirds of the delegates was needed to give consent to the moving of the motion. Mr R. A. King (New South Wales), the Minister for Aircraft Production (Senator D. Cameron), who was a delegate from Victoria, Calwell (Victoria), Mr S. J. Bryan (Queensland) and Mr Sheehan[10] (Victoria) opposed the motion, mostly because of the way it had been brought forward without notice. Curtin pleaded that the usual procedure could not be followed in wartime. He made the fine point that he was not seeking to alter policy but to gain an interpretation of policy.

Leave was granted by 28 votes to 8. Curtin formally moved his motion and fairly faced the charge that he was introducing conscription. Conscription, he said, was already the law in Australia for service in the defence of Australia. The interpretation he wanted was what was "the defence of Australia". He concluded his case by saying that if there were any doubts about his request the conference should not reject it outright but refer it to the State branches of the party.

This suggestion was adopted after an amendment placing reliance on volunteers from the C.M.F. transferring to the A.I.F. had been refused by the chairman, and the conference adjourned the discussion.[1]

The controversy shifted into the columns of the press, to the trade unions and to political meetings. The Federal Opposition declared that Curtin's proposal did not go far enough and complained that a decision had been delayed by referring the matter to State branches of the Australian Labour Party. The militia should be sent to any area where they were needed.

At a press conference on 20th November Curtin enlarged on the strategic necessity for "one army under one command".[2] In the succeeding days he attended a succession of Australian Labour Party meetings explaining his proposal. He had many opponents at the start. The press reports referred to opposition from Senator Cameron, Holloway, Ward, Calwell, Rosevear —his supporters in Parliament—and from Fallon, Federal President of the Australian Labour Party. On 23rd November, however, at a meeting of Full Cabinet a majority of Ministers supported Curtin. H. E. Boote, editor of the *Australian Worker* and veteran of the 1916 anti-conscription campaign, wrote that the Prime Minister's proposal contravened the policy of the Labour movement and violated a cardinal article of Australia's world-proclaimed faith in the unforced heroism of her sons.[3] Fallon said, on 3rd December, that the use of the word "merger" did not alter the fact that what was proposed was conscription pure and simple. Calwell could not understand the reason for the proposal "unless it was a move

[10] J. M. Sheehan. Senator 1938-40 and 1944-62; Past President Vic Branch of ALP. B. Castlemaine, Vic, 1889.

[1] Official Report, pp. 34-5.

[2] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Nov 1942.

[3] *Australian Worker*, 25 Nov 1942.

to frustrate the efforts of Labour's political enemies to embarrass Labour on that issue".[4] Labour meetings voted this way and that way.

One of the earliest declarations of unanimous support for the Prime Minister came from the Federated Ironworkers, led by the Communist Thornton. Wells, the general president of the Miners' Federation, also supported the proposal. The left-wing New South Wales Trades and Labour Council decided by 97 votes to 60 on 26th November to support Curtin. At that meeting Ward, the usual voice of New South Wales leftists in the Federal Parliament, had attacked Curtin bitterly but Curtin won the honours in a verbal Donnybrook. The final outcome of the controversy within the Labour Party was still uncertain when Parliament resumed on 10th December but Curtin was making headway. His strength was further revealed when, at a caucus meeting of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party on 9th December, an attempt was made to raise the issue. Curtin ruled it out of order on the ground that the Special Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party was dealing with the question. A motion of dissent moved by Calwell was rejected by 37 votes to 13.

The Opposition attacked. They could not quarrel with the purpose of the proposal for it was one they had advocated, but they recalled the Government's past hesitation, taunted it with a change of front and complained that such an important matter should have been considered in the first place by Cabinet and the Advisory War Council, and then presented to Parliament instead of being referred to a party conference. They made much of the division of opinion among Labour supporters and of the way in which a long delay in facing the issue was now succeeded by further delay in reaching a decision upon it. They also inquired what exactly the Prime Minister's proposal meant.

While the Opposition criticised, without either weakening or strengthening Curtin's proposal, a small minority of Labour members moved to dissent. On a motion for the printing of a statement on international affairs, Blackburn, an Independent supporter of Labour since his expulsion from the party, moved on 10th December an amendment which, if carried, would have read as a declaration by the House that it opposed "the imposition of any form of compulsory service outside Australia and the territories of the Commonwealth". Calwell seconded it and, with Brennan and Ward, spoke favourably of it. According to another Labour speaker the amendment was identical with the one which had been prepared by Calwell for submission to Caucus.[5]

The debate took place on two successive days and during its currency a further special Caucus meeting was called and was reported to have ended, after a short but very stormy session, in an agreement that the Labour Party would move for the adjournment of the debate without a vote being taken. On 11th December a Labour member did move the adjournment of the debate but, on a division, Blackburn and the Independent member, Coles, voted with the Opposition against this easy way out

[4] *Australian Worker*, 15 Dec 1942.
[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, p. 1805.

of the party's embarrassment, so that there were 34 votes for and 34 against. The Speaker gave his casting vote in favour of "obtaining a determination of the question during the present sittings of Parliament" and declared the motion lost. Blackburn's amendment was put immediately and lost on the voices, no division being called.[6]

Parliament rose on the 11th and interest shifted to the forthcoming Special Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party. Already Curtin seemed to be winning. He had gained support in the trade unions. He now had the backing of the majority of Cabinet. He had survived attack in the Caucus and the move against him in Parliament had been handled in a way that publicly exposed the weakness of the critics in his own party and yet had left a way for those critics to accept the direction of the party. Better still, it appeared that a majority of the States would support him in the Federal Labour conference. New South Wales and South Australia had already voted in favour of his proposal. Western Australia was expected to support him. Tasmania, after first voting one way, changed on 9th December. Queensland was divided and Curtin's supporters were still working on the members of the executive. The strongest opposition was centred in Victoria. The opponents of conscription started a campaign, largely at the instigation of Blackburn. The story of this effort, told by its adherents, is a story of an idea, rooted in the past, which failed to flourish in a new season. They were doomed in the succeeding months to see their supporters dwindle.[7]

On 4th January 1943 the Special Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party reassembled. The New South Wales, South Australian, Tasmanian and Western Australian executives of the party had sent letters endorsing Curtin's proposal in varying terms. Victoria and Queensland had replied opposing it. The proceedings, of which no more than a brief formal report has been published, lasted through Monday afternoon and evening and Tuesday morning. Calwell and Fallon led the opposition to Curtin's motion. In answer to Stewart, a New South Wales delegate, Curtin said "the South-West Pacific for practical purposes would be south of the Equator with its western boundaries unchanged and its eastern boundaries subject to some alteration towards New Caledonia". Late on Tuesday morning the time for the rising of the session was postponed to enable a vote to be taken. There were 24 in favour and 12 (the delegates from Victoria and Queensland) against. The Labour Party was in favour of conscription for overseas service within the limits of the South-West Pacific Area and, as Curtin subsequently explained, for "the war only".[8]

The decision of the Labour Party was put into effect by means of the Defence (Citizen Military Forces) Bill. Curtin presented the bill on 29th January, and opened the debate on it on 3rd February at 8 p.m. The clause chiefly relevant to the preceding events which have been

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[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, pp. 1694-1731 and 1798-1824.

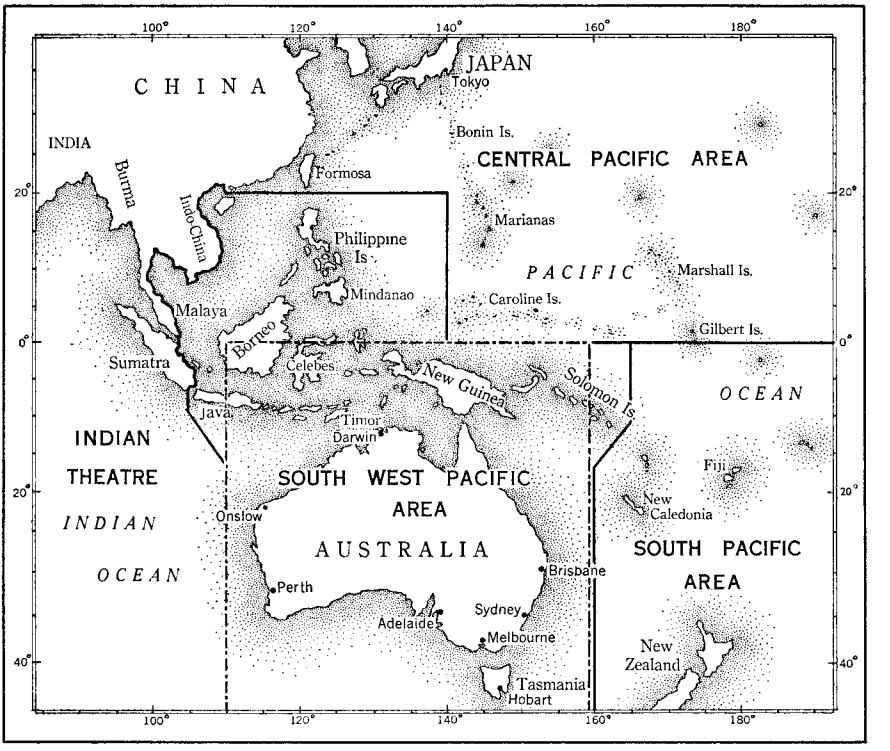
[7] Kenafick, *Maurice Blackburn and the No-Conscription Campaign in the Second World War*; McKellar, *Maurice Blackburn and the Struggle for Freedom.*

[8] Official Report, p. 42.

described was Clause 3. This defined the "South-West Pacific *Zone*"[9] as

> the area bounded on the west by the one hundred and tenth meridian of east longitude, on the north by the Equator and on the east by the one hundred and fifty-ninth meridian of east longitude,[1]

and the next clause provided that notwithstanding anything in the *Defence Act* or the *National Security Act*, "Citizen Military Forces may be required to serve in such area contained in the South-Western Pacific Zone as is specified by proclamation".[2] The legislation was to remain in force for six months after the end of hostilities.



South-West Pacific Area with South-West Pacific Zone superimposed, in broken lines.

The significance of the "Zone" in relation to the South-West Pacific *Area* may be seen in the accompanying map. The "Zone" had been drawn, said Curtin, in the light of the following considerations:

1. The strategical set-up in the South-West Pacific Area.
2. The objectives of global strategy in their particular relation to the South-West Pacific Area.

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[9] Author's italics.
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 264.
[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 264.

3. The nature of the forces required for operations in the Pacific areas.
4. The strength of the Australian naval, land and air forces available for commitments and for cooperation not only in the South-West Pacific Area, but also in other theatres as well.
5. Australia's manpower resources, and the maximum forces they are capable of maintaining in the field in tropical warfare.[3]

He justified the provisions of the Bill by asserting that they satisfied Australia's role in global strategy, and took account of the limitations in Australia's resources of manpower. The success of closely integrating ground forces with air power was one of the lessons of the Papuan campaign, and this technique was a substitute for difficult amphibious operations of an island-to-island nature under earlier conceptions of warfare; the coordinated use of land forces and air power conserved both manpower and shipping. Ultimate defeat of Japan hinged on naval and air strength; great armies would not be required, but Australia would make the maximum contribution of which she was capable. To ensure the defence of vital areas on the mainland "to meet all possible contingencies" of the strategical situation was beyond Australia's resources.

It is evident . . . that so long as the holding strategy obtains, with consequent restriction on the forces available to the South-West Pacific Area, Australia is primarily concerned with defence against aggression, and limited offensive action to ensure this.[4]

When MacArthur moved forward he would presumably do so with an Allied expeditionary force, and within the limits of the area defined by the bill the whole of Australia's naval, land and air forces could go with him. But, said Curtin

I assume . . . that he will reassign to the Australian Government and its service commanders the responsibility for the defence of his main base. His line of communication areas . . . will also require to be protected. Considerable forces will be required for these purposes.

A disturbing feature of recent campaigns had been the incidence of disease, which emphasised the need to proceed warily in undertaking new commitments.

Australia will maintain in the field the maximum strength of which it is capable; . . . the C-in-C will have these forces at his disposal anywhere in the South-West Pacific Zone; . . . beyond this region Australia will make the maximum contribution of which it is capable.[5]

Turning to the criticism which had been levelled at the proposed legislation, Curtin contended that Governments in the last four years, with majorities in both Houses, had failed to amend the *Defence Act*; the operations in the South-West Pacific Area had not been impeded by alleged delay after December 1941 in introducing an amendment. Some deference to the principle of "voluntaryism" must be paid, and to contend that the area proposed was too restricted took no account of the fact that

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 264.
[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 265-6.
[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 266.



ALL-IN — UP TO A POINT.

"**The Federal Government is unlikely to alter its present policy of not conscripting men for service outside Australia and its territories.**"

Scorfield in Bulletin *(Sydney) 14 Jan 1942*

In this cartoon comment on the controversy inside the Labour Party about service overseas Curtin is shown stopping the Australian soldier from following his American allies in the northward advance. This was published in January 1942, twelve months before Curtin succeeded in persuading the Labour Party to modify its policy.

while Great Britain and the United States had the greater responsibilities, they also had the greater resources. The role of the Dominions was largely passive and it was a fallacy to suggest that Australia, a small nation, "faced with a life and death struggle in its own region" should send forces to other theatres. He reiterated that with a holding strategy in the South-West Pacific Zone Australia's primary responsibility was the defence of Australia as the main base. The Bill provided for all that the Citizen Forces were likely to be able to undertake under the strategy contemplated in the S.W.P.A. But this was not the limit of Australia's effort since the Navy, the A.I.F. and the R.A.A.F. were still available for operations in any theatre when the strategical situation in the S.W.P.A. permitted. He dismissed summarily the complaint that Malaya had been abandoned; it was not at any time under MacArthur's command, and critics might as well contend that Australia had abandoned prisoners in Germany and Italy.

To MacArthur the Government now said, in effect:

> We will extend the area within which the Citizen Military Forces may be used. When your offensive exceeds the boundaries of this zone, you shall have in your Allied Expeditionary Force the maximum naval, land and air components that can be furnished, having regard to the needs of defending your base, which is Australia, and your line of communication areas, which are the territories you conquer; and having regard to the capacity of Australian manpower to maintain the forces that have been raised.[6]

In the subsequent discussions the Bill was supported and opposed from both sides of the House. The Opposition executive had decreed that while vigorously criticising the Bill, they would support it; in their view, half a biscuit was better than none at all, and to oppose it might mean that restrictions on the use of the C.M.F. would never be lifted. Government members who supported the Bill followed the arguments expounded by their leader, although it was significant that, apart from Forde and Evatt, Government supporters of the Bill contributed little.

Those Opposition members who opposed the Bill did so because they would be content with nothing short of unlimited use of the militia. Those Government members who opposed it appeared to do so from different motives: Blackburn defended a belief consciously and firmly held for a lifetime; others, however, had either the ostensible reason of championing the party's traditional policy, or the covert one of continuing the campaign of opposition to Curtin which was a feature of the political scene in the period.

Much of the debate concerned the assertion that the Government had promised to "merge" the two sections of the Australian Army. This the Bill did not do, nor could it be done in the future if the C.M.F. and the A.I.F. were still not permitted identical areas of employment. Much of the debate stemmed from a statement attributed to Curtin at a press conference on 20th November. Referring to the "outer screen running through New Guinea, the southern Solomons, the New Hebrides, New Caledonia and Fiji" from which Australia was being defended, he said it

[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 269.

was better to keep the eastern part of Australia inviolate by keeping the enemy at arm's length, and the same applied to defending north and western Australia where the battle would have to be fought in Timor and the islands adjacent thereto. These islands were vital to the holding of the Commonwealth. Indeed the continent of Australia became in fact a series of military islands, movement to and from each involving transport problems and making mobility a matter of difficulty.

> The delays in this connection were a bitter handicap in dealing with the enemy. That was why one army under one command for the military operations in the South-West Pacific was now a military necessity.[7]

Much of the Opposition attack consisted of taunts that a non-parliamentary Labour Party organisation and not the Government ruled the country; and that the party organisation had been responsible for the reduction in the original area proposed. The "Zone" had scant relation to the "Area" of MacArthur's command. In fact, as the C.M.F. was already fighting in Papua and New Guinea, the only new places in which it might serve as a result of passing the Bill were Timor, Ambon and Dutch New Guinea. Java, Borneo and Celebes must be disregarded since the boundary cut across them.

Cameron, from the back benches, was scornful of the Bill. He moved an amendment to the effect that the Bill should be withdrawn, redrafted, and made to permit the use of the C.M.F. "anywhere beyond the limits of Australia".[8]

Brennan, reviewing past events, opposed the principle of conscription: "I hold the view that it is simply wrong." Hughes taunted Curtin with having been for many years an opponent of the action he now endorsed. Calwell in extravagant language spoke of the "bathos and bunkum from Opposition benches" and continued:

> I hope that this Bill will be defeated, and as I have already said, if it does become law I hope it will be a dead letter. If it does not become a dead letter, I hope that in a few months the Labour Party of Australia, in conference assembled, will revert to the attitude which it formerly adopted in regard to conscription. When that occurs I believe that honorable members of the Labour Party in this Parliament will do their utmost to maintain the traditional policy of the party, which is not only a good policy for Labour, but also the only safe and sane policy for the Australian people, in the circumstances in which we find ourselves in the world today.[9]

Spooner concluded the discussion for the first day by reiterating the official view of the Opposition that, although the Bill in fact possessed very little merit, it established a principle and was a foundation upon which a better structure might be erected.

The resumption of the debate next morning brought little that was new in arguments in favour of the measure, but Forde, as Minister for the Army, chose to describe at length alleged deficiencies in military equipment which were part of the "appalling position of Australia's defences when this Government took office".[1] The level of the discussion descended.

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 46, pp. 5-6.
[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 317.
[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 343.
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 355.

In the following week Spender provided an incident in the closing stages. Openly rejecting the decision of the Opposition executive, of which he had been a member and from which he now resigned, Spender announced that he would vote against the Bill because in his view it did not establish a principle. The Prime Minister's original announcement, in Spender's view, had had in mind the South-West Pacific Area of MacArthur's command, not the Zone defined in the Bill. He concluded by refuting some of Forde's allegations about deficiencies.

About 9.30 that night Curtin rose to reply. He referred with some dignity to the part played by previous Governments in providing the industrial structure on which the Australian war effort was based, emphasising, however, the acceleration in that effort since Labour took office. His statement was a contrast to the extravagant claims of Forde. On the issue that the area had been reduced, even to exclude New Zealand, he recounted the reasons for excluding New Zealand at the time of the formation of the South-West Pacific Area by a decision on higher policy made in Washington and London. Nevertheless Curtin's arguments were weakened by the fact that while the "Zone" stopped at the equator the Allied strategy had placed the boundary of MacArthur's command much farther north.

Two other members spoke, and last of all Menzies endeavoured to move an amendment to Cameron's amendment in order to make the area in which Australians could serve any area which the Governor-General "after consultation with his military advisers, deems necessary for full cooperation with our Allies and the defeat of our enemies". The Speaker ruled this out of order and shortly before 11 p.m. Cameron's amendment was defeated by 56 votes to 13, Cameron, Coles, Harrison, Menzies and Spender being among those who voted for it.

An hour or so sufficed for the Committee stages. Blackburn, on Clause 2, sought an amendment which would in effect be an instruction to the Government to hold a referendum before the Bill could be proclaimed. This was defeated, and then Coles produced an amendment similar in purpose to that put forward by Menzies, that the Zone should include "such other areas as the Governor-General may from time to time proclaim as being essential for the defence of Australia or for the defeat of the enemy".

Brennan was speaking immediately before proceedings were suspended for supper, amid a medley of interjections. There was some confusion about what stage had been reached. When the House reassembled, Spender, Brennan, Blackburn, Coles and Fadden all took exception to a statement by the chairman that the question had been put and lost before supper. Even the discreet record of Hansard cannot disguise the fact that the question was decided in circumstances of confusion and disorder, to which the Chair had contributed.[2]

One last amendment by Blackburn that men over 21 years should not

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, pp. 615-16.

go outside the Commonwealth was also defeated, and the Bill passed to the Senate.

In the meantime there had been an Opposition move in the Senate concerning the conscription issue. While the Lower House was debating the Defence Bill, McLeay sought leave to bring in a Bill to amend the *National Security Act*, by removing from Section 13A the provision that nothing in the section should authorise the imposition of any form of compulsory service beyond the limits of Australia. With this removed, it was argued, it would be possible for conscription to be brought in by regulation. The Senate passed the Bill on the 18th, but six days later it was rejected by the House of Representatives.

On the same day the Defence Bill was returned to the Lower House without amendment. In the Senate the discussions on it had followed substantially those traversed in the Lower House. McLeay endeavoured in committee to include an amendment which would extend militia service to any area "in which it is necessary or expedient for the efficient prosecution of the war for them to serve".[3] The voting was even, as it was in another amendment moved by Spicer that the area include New Zealand, and both votes were resolved in the negative in accordance with Senate practice. Thus the Bill was unchanged, and on 19th February it became law.[4]

Opposition within the Labour Party was not immediately extinguished. At the Annual Conference of the Victorian Branch of the party (29th April to 1st May) the executive's rejection of conscription was endorsed by 142 votes to 80. And in New South Wales the Lang newspaper continued its "conscription barometer" which was alleged to show the solid bloc against conscription in that State. However, on 5th and 6th June, 400 delegates at the annual conference of the New South Wales Branch of the party approved the Government's action by a two-to-one majority, to the obvious pleasure of Curtin who was present. It was recognised that any result of a vote at this conference would almost certainly affect the vote on the question at the next Interstate Conference. This was to have taken place in July, but ultimately was held on 13th December 1943, four months after Labour's landslide victory at the polls; the published proceedings merely record the previous decisions, and no formal motion on conscription was before the conference.

The conclusion of this matter was a political achievement for Curtin. He had come through the criticism of the Opposition with more public credit for his party than the Opposition had gained for itself. It was only left for them to say that, instead of putting a limit at the equator, he should have made the militia available for service anywhere and that, by so doing, he would have merged the home defence and expeditionary forces into one army. He had brought his own party to make a major decision, reversing traditional policy, without splitting the party. As suggested in earlier chapters of the present work,[5] a considerable part of the political

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, pp. 875 and 876.
[4] Act No. 2 of 1943.
[5] See *The Government and the People, 1939-1941* p. 246 ff.

achievement was the way he managed to maintain the integrity of his party and, consequently, to make that integrated party more useful in the service of the nation. If Curtin had managed less ably, not only would the Labour Party have suffered but there would have been instability of government at that stage, for although the Opposition was playing on the divisions within the Government, there are no clear signs that, at that stage, their efforts were associated with any clear and practicable plan for an alternative government. The majority of the Opposition who supported the Bill while giving themselves the privilege of criticising the Government can at least claim that they were facing the realities of the existing political situation. Those who voted to extend the area, having in fact no prospect of making their views prevail without bringing down the Government, may claim the merit that they were standing firm for views conscientiously held, but they also incur the judgment either that they were only making a political demonstration for purposes unconnected with the Bill itself, or that they were in such a state of political innocence that they hoped for the success of their amendments without realising that their success would defeat their objective, giving them not the full loaf but no bread at all and upsetting the baker's cart in the bargain. In the end Curtin, in the driver's seat, got full credit for delivering half a loaf.

It remains to consider whether this discussion of conscription, which had taken the front of the political stage for so many months, had contributed anything substantial to the waging of the war. Three main arguments have a bearing on this point. One is that "conscription" (to the extent provided in the Act) was made necessary by strategy. The second is that it was required by Australia's allies. The third is that the change was necessary for the conducting of the Australian war effort as a whole. In the light of later events, some doubt may be raised on the first and third of these arguments. In fact the operational role of Australian land forces from this point onwards was a limited one and it is implicit in nearly everything that Curtin said on strategy that he was aware that it would be a limited one. Moreover, a good deal of what he had said earlier suggests that he preferred this limited role for Australia. The stating of the limits of militia service as being within the South-West Pacific Zone was not simply a convenient way of reassuring sections of the Labour Party that the overseas service was strictly service for the defence of Australia; it indicated Curtin's own conception of what the main body of Australian troops should and would be called on to do and he coupled his statements on this point on many occasions with statements which revealed that he expected the Australian troops to relieve American troops in bases and reoccupied territory when the Americans moved forward. As it turned out, this is what Australian militia troops and some A.I.F. troops did.

In the course of 1943 the Australian military forces were reorganised into a striking force of three A.I.F. divisions and the remainder were, in an extended sense of the term, still "home defence troops" or troops for mopping up or occupation duties. As it turned out, not even the whole

of the striking force was used in the advance. Furthermore, as has been indicated in an earlier chapter, it was becoming obvious before the amending legislation was passed, that the over-commitment of Australian manpower would mean that Australia would have to consider reducing her land forces. By July 1943, after the return of another A.I.F. division from overseas, the Australian Military Forces had been reduced from twelve divisions to eleven—the reduced number of divisions contained three infantry divisions of fewer than three brigades and two "light armoured divisions" of only two brigades—while by July 1944 the A.M.F. had been reduced to eight divisions. The question of service overseas necessarily affected only a portion of this force and service outside the South-West Pacific Area was unlikely for most of it. As already shown above, the transference of volunteers from C.M.F. to A.I.F. provided a force more than sufficient for any commitments for service overseas. In view of these facts it is difficult to accept the view that the move made by Curtin was largely a recognition of and response to military necessity.

His conception of Australia's duty to an ally was undoubtedly a persuasive argument. There appears to be no evidence, other than rumours current during the controversy, that either MacArthur or the United States Government had suggested or sought "conscription" of the Australian militia, nor is there evidence that Australian military advisers had recommended it to the Government. There was at the time considerable play in the Australian press and in sections of the American press to the general effect that, while America was sending conscripts to defend Australia, the Australian Government still refused to conscript its own men, and these comments, multiplied in political controversy, may have had an effect on Australian pride and self-respect. Curtin and his Ministers, too, having been so recently engaged in the struggle to obtain further materials and armed aid from the United States, may have felt that their case would have been stronger if there had not been this sign of something less than a complete war effort on their own part. It is doubtful, however, whether, in fact, the change made by Curtin could have been prompted by this persuasion alone and it is almost certain, so far as the evidence goes, that the change was not forced on him by any Allied request.

The more considerable influences would appear to be those that arose from the pressures and the chances of domestic politics. Whatever other thoughts may have been moving around in the privacy of Curtin's own mind, the public evidence suggests that his calculation of political chances at the coming election and his shrewd response to the political campaigning of the Opposition were the decisive influence.

It remains to consider the special position of Curtin within his own party and the personal and human problem which faced him. As a young man in the 1914-18 war he had campaigned vigorously against conscription. In those days, when Curtin was in Court on a minor charge, Blackburn had been counsel for his defence. Now Blackburn stood for the 1914-18 ideals and Curtin was moving to upset the traditions for which he had fought by Blackburn's side.

Those who opposed conscription in the 1914-18 war did so for many different reasons.[6] In the course of time some of those reasons had lost some of their force. The circumstances had changed. In the 1914-18 war it could be argued that young men were being conscripted to go overseas to "fight England's battles"; in 1943 the young men were needed to fight in the islands adjacent to Australia in continuance of the operations in which they had already been engaged in Australian territory. In 1914-18 it could be argued that their blood was to be spilt in foreign lands for foreign imperialism, and the old warning to keep out of the entanglements of European power politics could be used; in 1943 the military operations were more directly related to the defence of the Australian continent, and were part of operations which would push an invading force farther away from Australian shores and bring about the defeat of an enemy from whom Australia itself had been in immediate danger. In such circumstances, too, the Irish-Australian republican and anti-British elements which had been a factor in the 1916 campaign had no part in the 1943 campaign, although in any case they would have been less powerful than in the past for, in the course of a quarter of a century, their influence in the Australian Labour Party and among Australian churchmen had lessened. In 1943 most of the potential trouble-makers for Labour—the extreme left-wing and the Communists—supported conscription for they had no doctrinal objections to conscription as such and, in their enthusiasm for Russia, regarded additional overseas commitments by Australia at this juncture as a necessary contribution to victory. Thus the opponents of conscription in 1943 were mainly those who based their arguments on ethics and party tradition. They reinforced their objection by also arguing that conscription was unnecessary.

The recorded objections in the debates of the special Commonwealth conferences of the Australian Labour Party which considered the proposal in November 1942 and January 1943, were mainly that a traditional principle of the Labour movement was being upset and that all that was necessary could be supplied by voluntary enlistment. The case urged more strongly by those Labour supporters who campaigned publicly against the proposals was that conscription was being supported by the Communists, and was therefore suspect; that the South Africans had rejected conscription; and that Forde and Curtin had said that there were sufficient men without conscription. They pointed to the numbers of militiamen enlisting in the A.I.F., to the experience of Canada where, though conscription had been endorsed, the Government had decided against its introduction. Senator Cameron[7] emphasised the danger of industrial conscription once military conscription had been accepted; the only reason why conscription was being canvassed now, he said, was to prevent wealth from being conscripted. He spoke of the effect on the Labour Party, and the possibility of a split. H. E. Boote, writing vituperative editorials, constantly reiterated the statement that conscription was a "Tory" policy.[8]

[6] See *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp. 27-8.
[7] See *Labour Call* (Melbourne).
[8] See *Australian Worker* (Sydney).

A distinction was drawn between defence of one's own territory after invasion by an enemy and service overseas. Reason and instinct combined to bid a man defend his home and family against the foreign trespasser and only a tiny minority believed that the invader's force might not rightly be resisted by force. "If we respect and protect the beliefs of the non-resistant minority," wrote Blackburn, "compulsion for those who are prepared to resist is merely organisation." On the other hand compulsion to serve overseas was compulsion to fight in cold blood. The conscript might be ordered to enter countries against whose people he had no resentment and there to slay men whom he knew were rising merely to resist invasion—even men whose only offence was that they refused to be embroiled in a quarrel which was not their quarrel.

Blackburn then expanded this argument by making a distinction between the conscript and the volunteer in such a situation. The volunteer knew that he could be ordered to slay men who resisted him.

> He has prepared himself to attack the stranger in his foreign home because he believes that the stranger's rulers are leagued with the enemy and possible invader of Australia. He holds that to enter the stranger's country and there to slay the stranger will weaken Australia's enemy and make invasion less likely. Whether he has reasoned rightly or wrongly, his judgment and his will were free. No one could take away that freedom. But conscription would destroy that freedom of judgment and of will. The conscriptionist stands for an absolutist State which, overriding the conscience, the judgment and the will of a man, can compel him to kill.

The answer to these arguments was to say in effect that the actual war situation made quite unreal any rigid distinction between home defence against an invader and service overseas. For instance, was it right to conscript men to defend Darwin from enemy bombers and wrong to conscript men to dislodge Japanese from the adjacent islands and thus prevent them from bombing Darwin? Curtin, in his first approach to the Australian Labour Party Special Conference in November 1942, after claiming that the "whole conception of the war had altered" when Japan entered the war, said that he had opposed participation by Australia in overseas wars all his life and did not now ask for anything but that the definition of Australian territory be extended to cover areas vital to Australia. Conscription was the law in Australia for service in the defence of Australia and all he wanted was an interpretation of the "defence of Australia".

To this the answer of the anti-conscriptionists was to point to the way that the traditional Labour view on conscription had been whittled down since 1940 and to express the fear that, although at present the Government might set the equator as the northern limit of the area vital to the defence of Australia, there was no saying what it would do or how much farther it would go when it reached that limit. They made some play, too, of the absurdity of Australian conscripts being halted at an imaginary line in the middle of a battle on an island bisected by the equator.

A further argument of the anti-conscriptionists, calling up the fears of the trade unionists in the 1916 battle, was that the power of drafting men into the front line would be used as an instrument of coercion against anyone who stood up for his industrial rights. Blackburn wrote:

> If you give to any man the power to decide whether another shall or shall not be sent abroad to fight, you make him that other's master. The more that other dreads being called on to serve out of Australia the more careful will he be to avoid offending the authority that can send him. Striking coalminers have already been threatened that they will be taken from the mines and put in the army. How much more intimidating would be that threat if the striker could be conscripted to serve overseas. The conscriptionist does not propose that every fit man shall be sent to fight overseas. He demands that every fit man shall be at the disposal of the military and the manpower authorities to go or to stay as they may direct. If the conscriptionist policy is adopted, each eligible man in Australia will enjoy on sufferance his home, the companionship of his family and his friends, his liberty of action and his freedom of conscience. A single act, a single omission, one word, a breath of rumour may deprive him of all these. No doubt the military and the manpower authorities will act according to their own conception of the national interest and the national need. But their act will be arbitrary. In the myriad of individual cases how could a Minister, how could Parliament, interfere? Knowing this, the exempt worker will hesitate to assert his own rights or support others in asserting their rights.

Elsewhere he expressed his objection to conscription for overseas service because it would make "the military power supreme".

Two other arguments were also advanced frequently. One was that conscription was unnecessary because Australia could always depend on volunteers for overseas service. The other was that "No conscription" was affirmed by the people as part of Australian defence policy in the referenda of 1914-18 and it should not be abrogated except by the will of the people. In 1916, the critics said, Hughes had at least submitted the issue to the people. Hughes himself, forgetting the political necessities that had led him to appeal to the people in 1916, also capitalised his virtue. Speaking "as one who for twenty-seven years has been exposed to obloquy as the arch priest of conscription," he said: "I pledged myself to give the people an opportunity to express an opinion on the conscription issue, and I did so. The Prime Minister gave the same pledge, but he has dishonoured it."

Curtin's answer again was that the issue was an interpretation of "the defence of Australia". He does not appear ever to have contemplated a referendum. He made his appeal and carried his arguments to the trade unions, and the special conferences of the Australian Labour Party and, having convinced them and in turn having convinced the Federal parliamentary Caucus of his own party, he carried the proposed extension of the theatre of overseas service into effect. Once he had gained the victory for his ideas in the Labour conferences there was no doubt in his mind that he had sufficient approval for what he proposed to do and, by choosing that method, he had avoided the danger of any splitting of the Labour Party by its members campaigning against each other in public. He had achieved what he thought most of the nation wished to see done and he had held his party together. There remained only some sorrowful

hearts; some saddened Labour men of a past generation who felt that the light had gone from the face of John Curtin.

Blackburn was defeated by an endorsed Labour candidate at the 1943 elections. A period of almost thirty years' service to the party had ended in his rejection by the party. A consistent battling for liberal ideals, with a single-mindedness which has few parallels in Australian politics, appeared to have ended in the rejection of one of the most firmly held of these ideals. "Pugnacity for the right was his dominant quality," wrote one of his associates. Menzies, an opponent and an admirer, said of him in Parliament:

> He was, as we all know, a man of many qualities, but perhaps his most remarkable quality was his indomitable moral courage. What he felt to be right was, in his mind, right, and he would pursue it wherever the journey might take him.

He died in March 1944. Curtin quietly joined the throng of friends at the graveside at the Box Hill cemetery, and quietly went away. The Labour Party had laid to rest more than the body of the man whom they had expelled. Their discipline had triumphed and their success at the elections had justified them.

4—THE STATE OF THE PARTIES

The contention in the Labour Party had become less noticeable and the figure of the Prime Minister himself had become brighter as the election drew near. It was the Curtin Government rather than a Labour Government which captured the sympathy of people and persuaded men and women, some of them habitually opposed to Labour, that the Government was worthy of support.

Curtin's difficulties, however, were not over. He had to reconcile the conflicting elements in his Cabinet, and to deal with unconcealed opposition by a section of the party in Parliament.

In the Cabinet Dedman's zeal had provoked a Cabinet crisis in December 1942. An order prohibiting the employment of domestic servants ran counter to the views of Evatt. Ostensibly, doubt about the validity of the Minister's order was the reason for postponing its operation but Evatt was the member of Cabinet most sensitive to the reactions of the middle-class vote and most eager to placate it; and Dedman's order would most certainly prove unpopular in that quarter. The order was redrafted. Much earlier there had been an alignment of Cabinet opinion which presented Dedman and Evatt on opposite sides. In May Evatt and Ward had held the view that the introduction of rationing of clothing would be taken as an indication of the Government's inability to provide necessities. Dedman, however, was not so convinced, and action by Curtin, Chifley and himself presented the others with a *fait accompli.*

Dedman's actions the Prime Minister could sincerely defend; he had more difficulty with the increasingly embarrassing statements of his Minister for Labour. Ward's attitude over Regulation 168, his unqualified championship of the miners in the face of his leader's appeals, his open

hostility to his Director-General of Manpower, and the final dispute about the "Brisbane Line" not only embarrassed Curtin, but also provided a hostile press with plenty of material, and went far to alienate that section of the Opposition which was concerned to honour a pledge of cooperation in wartime.

There was also division in the Cabinet over the constitutional amendments to be sought for post-war reconstruction and over the best course to adopt to meet the political difficulties aroused by the original proposals. This issue, perhaps even more clearly than the "conscription" issue, illustrates that differences between Ministers were not only over matters of political judgment in particular situations but were also doctrinal.

In any Government other than a Labour Government the differences between Ministers during 1942 and 1943, both on doctrine and in particular situations, might have led to resignations of Ministers, either voluntarily or at the Prime Minister's request. Labour Ministries, however, respecting the authority of an extra-parliamentary conference and party executive, have something equivalent to a court of appeal and this allows them to think that a Cabinet decision need not always be the final and authoritative decision. Furthermore the practice by which the parliamentary caucus elects the Ministers tends to make members of a Ministry aware at all times of those outside Cabinet who share their views and on whom they depend for re-election as Ministers. The present argument is not whether such practices produce better or worse Cabinets but that they give flexibility in interpreting the requirements of collective responsibility or the demands of political conscience and thus they help Labour Ministries to remain intact under internal stress and strain. Furthermore, at this time, the Curtin Ministry, brought to office by the votes of two Independents and hoping to better their condition at the next election, had strong practical inducements to hold together.[9]

In Parliament, criticism from Blackburn and Brennan on matters of principle was not unexpected and it seldom embarrassed the Government. Much more constant was the criticism by Calwell. He had been a member of the State Public Service in Victoria from the age of 17; had resigned from the State Treasury staff to contest the Melbourne seat, vacant after the death of a notable Labour figure, Dr Maloney.[1] Elected to the House for the first time in 1940, Calwell, though a parliamentary newcomer, was old in service to the party. Since 1926 he had been a member of the Victorian Central Executive, and since 1931 of the Federal Executive. He was well versed in the established policy of the party, and it was on this that he usually took his stand. He spoke often and on any subject with obstinacy, vigour and authority, and, even though party loyalty commanded his vote, his words in debate were no less damaging and annoying to Curtin because his presence in the divisions was useful.

[9] An interesting light is thrown both on the situation in 1942 and on Labour Party views on collective responsibility by an article by J. J. Dedman, "The Practical Application of Collective Responsibility" contributed to *Politics*, Vol III, No. 2, November 1968, pp. 148-162.

[1] Dr W. R. N. Maloney. MLA Vic 1889-1904; MHR 1904-40. B. West Melbourne, 12 Apr 1854. Died 28 Aug 1940.

For the first months of intensified war in 1942 the Opposition cooperated more or less faithfully with the Government, and limited its opposition to criticism of some of the regulations which it regarded as extreme. As the peril lessened the Opposition met with some complaint from its own supporters for undue passivity. Moreover the unbridled remarks of Ward, which the Government did not appear to check, provoked resentment even among those Opposition members who regarded cooperation as their fit and proper course of action at such a time. Following an Opposition executive meeting at the end of July 1942, a more vigorous attack began on such questions as the proposal to limit profits to 4 per cent, the Government's failure to handle the coal problem, the imposition of tax on service pay and the Government's attitude to liquor abuses. In fact, the Government announced the abandonment of the 4 per cent profit proposals some days later, and agreed to exempt tax on the lower service rates of pay, but the attack was sustained. In succeeding months the Opposition found a new theme about the Department of War Organisation of Industry under the direction of Dedman. They complained that the department was administered by theorists, the Minister was himself doctrinaire and his Director and Deputy-Director had not had the right kind of training for their jobs; moreover the department was engaged in back-door dealings with industry to escape criticism. They alleged, and Curtin denied, that attempts were being made to introduce socialisation under the excuse of war. In this phase of their political activity the Opposition would appear to have been making hay out of the results of the slashing away at Dedman and his department by sections of the press and by those interests who were affected by the restrictions he imposed.

Hughes then opened another phase of the attack by criticism of the military leaders. Calling for a more offensive spirit he asserted:

> Our policy is following blindly the track which led to the downfall of Malaya and all the other countries which fell. . . . There has been a lamentable lack of vision, of initiative, of coordination and of control by our military leaders. They have failed to anticipate the enemy's movements. . . . Did those in control of our military defences not know that Buna and Gona were of strategic value?[2]

This speech was received with some reserve; certainly the call for an offensive spirit was salutary, but all knew that forces had still to be built up. Hughes's speech appeared ill-suited to his role as a member of the Advisory War Council, and it lost some of its force by reason of the American attack in the Solomons announced twelve days later. Some sections of the press saw Hughes as an embarrassment to his party, and there were hints on the need for his replacement.

The issue disappeared, however, in a livelier argument which started when Hughes alleged that, in sending reports of his speech overseas, "political" censorship had been applied, and certain sections of the speech had been omitted.[3] The newspapers took up the cry, and on 18th August

[2] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 Aug 1942.

[3] For a fuller discussion of censorship see Chapter 7.

Warwick Fairfax[4] of the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced his resignation from the Press Censorship Advisory Committee. The Government had advanced security as the reason for censorship but, said Fairfax, it had never been the only ground; there was censorship on the grounds of morale, and there was diplomatic censorship. "There has also been the futile and dangerous policy of trying to prevent facts or opinions which represent Australia in a bad light from going out of the country."[5]

The incident provoked an emotional outburst by Curtin. Speaking to an audience in Brisbane on the 18th he said:

> I am not going into arguments about whether this or that was properly censored. . . . The Government is either right or wrong. If the Opposition is prepared to put it out I am quite ready to invite it to take the necessary action. . . . I am not going to wait six months for the crumbling and white-anting to set in and for the conjuring up of labels such as Wardism and Dedmanism.[6]

"I know who my critics are and what they have been," he declared, and followed this with allusions to the careers of Hughes, Menzies and Spender in terms which, from the mouth of a national leader, could only be regarded as unfortunate.

It is possibly significant that the following day he made his first appeal for a period of austerity, for dedication to the war effort; and that, in his exalted frame of mind, the Opposition's attacks, and the previous week of frustrating negotiations with State premiers about restrictions on liquor, appeared the more irritating and petty. But such outbursts stirred the Opposition still further. There was talk of withdrawing from the Advisory War Council. Both Government and Opposition started dancing around the ring making sparring motions while the war went on its way. The Budget debates began; the Opposition continued their attacks on Ward and on Dedman and his department with varying vigour, until a more contentious matter came to their hand in the conscription issue. Although this was a matter likely to cause internal difficulty to the Government, it might have been thought that the issue would be clear for the Opposition. The closing debates on the Bill in Parliament revealed, however, that the Opposition leader could not count on the support of all members to the policy laid down by the Opposition executive. Spender, Menzies, Harrison and Stewart supported Cameron's amendment, despite their membership of that executive, and its decision that no amendment should be moved. Spender resigned from the executive, as did Menzies and Harrison. In the world outside party rooms the suspicion was aroused that not only had the Opposition split on the best method of embarrassing the Government but that there was a more deeply-seated struggle inside the Opposition itself.

Signs of a breach in the United Australia Party became visible when on 25th March, in answer to a round robin signed by nineteen members

[4] Sir Warwick Fairfax. Managing Director, John Fairfax & Sons Ltd 1930-49, Governing Director 1949-56, Chairman since 1956. B. 1901.

[5] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 Aug 1942.

[6] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 Aug 1942.

(ten from the House of Representatives and nine from the Senate) Hughes summoned a meeting of the party—the first for over a year. A motion by Beck[7] of Tasmania that all positions should be declared vacant was interpreted as an open move to depose Hughes from the leadership of the U.A.P. The motion was reported to have been defeated by 24 votes to 15. Most of the speeches, so the newspaper reports ran, were concerned with the need for a younger leader, and the inference made by the newspapers was that a move was being made to restore Menzies to leadership. Menzies denied that he had anything to do with calling the meeting, but Hughes was reported to have commented that Menzies had been "doubtfully loyal".[8] Differences over policy and tactics were also apparent. Spooner and Holt, who were reported to support Hughes and to be against Menzies, submitted to members a 30-point draft of a new policy calling for a wartime Government representing all parties, a unified Australian Army, transfer of additional functions from the States to the Commonwealth, preservation and encouragement of private enterprise and measures for post-war development. One point favoured the mobilisation of the nation's financial resources by means of a balanced plan of taxation, post-war credits and the use of the central bank's resources. As an example of practical political thinking the draft was not likely either to rally the party or impress the public.

On 1st April, just before the House adjourned, Hughes received a letter signed by Cameron, Duncan-Hughes, Price and Stacey,[9] and Senators McLeay, McBride, A. J. McLachlan,[10] James McLachlan,[1] Uppill[2] and Wilson[3] from South Australia, Menzies and Senators Leckie and Spicer from Victoria, Beck and Senator Sampson from Tasmania, Senator Collett from Western Australia, and Harrison from New South Wales. This letter, a copy of which went to Fadden, indicated that the signatories had formed themselves into a National Service Group under an executive of five (Menzies, McLeay, McBride, Beck and Harrison). The group saw grave anxiety at the drift of events, the failure of the Government to create one Australian Army, the inadequate appreciation of Britain's war effort, the rise in prices and such matters as taxation for social services, strikes and disorganisation in food and manpower, as well as inadequate service preference. It was "essential to reorganise the U.A.P. under new and vigorous leadership. But in order to avoid division we intend to act within the party." The group would not attend party meetings.

The response was disappointing for the group. Its action was interpreted as a move to bring Menzies back to political leadership. Most sections of the press deplored the move, and thought it was ill-judged from either

[7] A. J. Beck, MC. (1st AIF: 59 Bn.) MHR 1940-43. B. Launceston, Tas, 8 Jul 1892.
[8] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 Mar 1943.
[9] F. H. Stacey. MHR 1941-43. B. Carey Gully, SA, 6 Aug 1879.
[10] Hon A. J. McLachlan. Senator 1926-44; Postmaster-General 1934-38. B. Naracoorte, SA, 2 Nov 1872. Died 28 May 1956.
[1] J. McLachlan. Senator 1934-47. B. Alma, SA, 9 Mar 1871. Died 1 Dec 1956.
[2] O. Uppill. Senator 1934-44. Died 4 Mar 1946.
[3] Sir Keith Wilson. (2nd AIF: 2/7 Fd Regt.) Senator 1938-44; MHR 1949-54 and 1955-66. B. St Peters, SA, 3 Sep 1900.

a national or a party point of view. Stewart, who expressed himself in sympathy with the group, felt he could not join them because the time was inopportune to divide anti-Labour forces, and Perkins alleged that those who led the split had only one objective—political gain. The group's nine-point policy was announced on 1st April. They wanted full cooperation with the Allies, one army, and the employment of the whole of the country's financial resources. All should pay some tax, and there should be no talk of social benefits while a war was on. Moreover there "was much to be said for the view that the civilian war worker should not receive loaded rates simply because his war work is done after a certain hour. . . . Soldiers do not get double pay for Sunday." The middle class must not be wiped out, and "we decline to believe that the State by its own efforts will build a new order worth more than talking about, so our industries and their initiative must be preserved". Menzies broadcast on 4th April, and on the 6th a meeting of the New South Wales State Council of the U.A.P. was addressed by Hughes. They declared for Hughes and against the group, and Harrison was to be asked whether he recognised Hughes's leadership of the U.A.P. Harrison in reply said that he did, and "Mr Hughes would receive the support of the National Service Group as long as he remained leader of the party".

Outside Parliament there were attempts to form new political associations. Two early examples will suffice. The Liberal Democratic Party was launched by S. S. Crick,[4] a former Sydney Lord Mayor, and E. K. White,[5] president of the Australian-American Cooperation Movement, on 17th April 1943. It was interested in "the little people who have so far been inarticulate", and declared that it had no political aspirations or connections, but would present candidates at the elections. It hoped that it could "form a bridge between the bigger opposing parties across which the best elements in each would approach each other and form a National Government".

The United Ex-Service Men and Women's Political Association of Australia appeared in Victoria in February 1943, and subsequently split to form another group—the Services' and Citizens' Party—in June.

The details of these dissensions and these movements and the story of their outcome belong to the post-war history of the return to political leadership of Menzies, the death of the United Australia Party and the birth of the Liberal Party and they will not be dealt with here. Their significance in 1943, when elections were impending, was the public evidence they revealed of a disunited Opposition and of confusion of Opposition policy. Although this political activity did reflect some criticism or lack of enthusiasm for the Government it flashed more clearly to the electors the news that the Opposition was in a mess.

As the months moved on towards the required election, the Opposition

[4] S. S. Crick. Lord Mayor of Sydney 1940-42. Of Sydney; b. Launceston, Tas, 9 Oct 1888.

[5] E. K. White, CBE, MC. (1st AIF: 4 Bn.) President, Liberal Democratic Party 1943. Of Sydney; b. Gosford, NSW, 14 Aug 1892.

livened its parliamentary attack, using more effectively its position in the Senate where it had a majority of two.

In the first weeks of March 1943 the Senate Opposition obtained amendments to the Income Tax Assessment Bill, chiefly in relation to the deferred pay and dependants' allowances of members of the Defence forces, deductions for housekeepers, and refunds of excess payments; and when the Bill returned to the Lower House on the following day the Government agreed to accept them.[6] On the Income Tax Bill the Senate made an amendment to delete the provision in the Bill that it should not come into operation earlier than the date of the *National Welfare Fund Act*.[7] The Opposition quoted Section 55 of the Constitution to the effect that a law on taxation could deal with taxation only, and contended that the provision contravened the Constitution.

In the House, when Chifley moved that the requested amendment be not made, Fadden argued that the Government was using the "sugar coating" of welfare to sweeten the pill of taxation on the lower range of incomes; the money was needed for the war; there was no need to tie the proposal to "any specious scheme of future social services".[8] When the Bill was returned to the Senate and it was moved that the requested amendment be not pressed, the Opposition defeated the Government by 15 votes to 13, and pressed the Senate request.

Although the constitutional rights of the two Chambers were at issue and part of the Government's social welfare programme was involved, Curtin acted swiftly to avert a crisis. He promoted a conference of representatives of the Senate and the House, and this conference produced a form of words which recognised without resolving the question of constitutional rights,[9] and accepted the Senate's amendment in return for an undertaking

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[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 174, p. 1588.

[7] In making his Financial Statement Chifley (see *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 548, 11 Feb 1943) had outlined a National Welfare Scheme and immediately afterwards he introduced a National Welfare Bill the main purpose of which was to "establish . . . a fund to finance the scheme", in the form of a "trust account under Section 62A of the *Audit Act*". Details of the scheme, which included maternity benefit and funeral benefits, unemployment and sickness benefits and several health services, would need much detailed preparation in some of its sections and the intention was to pay an annual sum from consolidated revenue into the fund and at a later stage to bring in proposals for increased taxation to provide the necessary revenue for the fund. Credit balances in the fund, until such time as the scheme was working, would provide a useful source of temporary finance for war purposes. (Vol 173, pp. 555-6.)

[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 174, p. 1597.

[9] The question at issue between the two Houses concerns what is known in parliamentary practice as "tacking", that is the inclusion in a money Bill of a clause by means of which the adoption of a money Bill is linked with the adoption of another measure. In the case under notice it was provided in the Income Tax Bill that the Proclamation of the Act should not be "earlier than the date upon which the *National Welfare Fund Act 1943* comes into operation". The Senate, which was unable to reject a money Bill, had not yet considered the National Welfare Fund Bill and consequently it was asked to place itself in the position that unless it eventually accepted the second Bill, the taxation measure could not be put into operation. The parliamentary arguments against this course were well put by Senator Spicer in the Senate and by Menzies in the House. (*Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 174, pp. 1522-24 and 1606-08.) The Constitutional arguments concerned the question whether there was any contravention of Section 55 of the Commonwealth Constitution which states that laws imposing taxation shall deal only with the imposition of taxation and any provision therein dealing with any other matter shall be of no effect. The opinion of the Government's legal advisers was that the provision objected to by the Senate definitely related to the commencement of the tax law and was not "other matter" within the meaning of Section 55. The Opposition argued that it was difficult to believe that the words about the National Welfare Fund related merely to the time. Later in the debate a further question of the constitutional rights of the Chambers arose from the decision of the Senate to press its request for amendment. On receiving the second message from the Senate, the Speaker commented that the right of the Senate to press for an amendment had never been admitted by the House of Representatives, though on previous occasions, the House, having regard to the fact that public welfare demanded the passing of certain legislation, had refrained from a determination of its constitutional rights and obligations. (*Commonwealth*

by the Senate that it would consider the National Welfare Fund Bill immediately and complete its consideration within the next two days. When a member of the House contested the view that the Senate "had won a hundred per cent victory" and himself described the result as "fifty-fifty", Calwell interjected: "One horse, one rabbit"—an allusion to a contemporary joke about a baker who claimed to put equal quantities of horse-meat and rabbit into his pies. What was even plainer than the fact that the Opposition in the Senate had got its amendment was the fact that the Government did not want an election yet and certainly did not want one in conditions that might affect its chances of winning Senate seats.

On 24th March the Government introduced in the Senate a Bill to "ensure that every member of the Australian forces . . . will be able to record an effective vote".[1] This meant extending the franchise to some persons under the existing age limit of 21. On the following day McLeay successfully moved the postponement of the debate for a month and as Parliament adjourned on 1st April, the bill languished until 24th June before the Senate once again considered it.

The Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Bill, which was concerned mainly with pensions for ex-servicemen, was amended by the Senate and, while the House accepted four of the Senate's amendments, it sought to modify a further amendment by which the Senate added a new clause giving preference in employment to returned soldiers. This caused political difficulty for the Government which had not yet resolved the differences of opinion in its own ranks on the question of preference to returned soldiers. Some sections of the industrial movement were opposed to preference. Curtin attempted to make a reasoned case against the Senate amendment by arguing that preference in employment was a complex subject, and that instead of introducing it into a bill dealing with repatriation benefits, it could be dealt with more effectively by separate measures. The Government's concern was to provide jobs for all and it was more important to concentrate on this.

Facing the reality that the Opposition had the numbers in the Senate and that this was also a bad issue on which to challenge the Senate, the Government moved to accept the Senate amendment but proposed a further amendment possibly as a placatory move to a section of its own supporters. By this further amendment the preference would be extended not only to servicemen but to any civilian workers who had served in a ship or as members of the crew of a civil aircraft in a combat zone.

Calwell described the Senate amendment as "a piece of political chicanery for the purpose of placing the Government in a most difficult and even untenable position". An Opposition member, Perkins, who wanted the

Debates, Vol 174, p. 1737.) On this occasion, too, the House refrained from "the determination of its constitutional rights" and took the Senate's message into consideration. As the outcome of the conference between representatives of the two Chambers that was promoted by Curtin both the Senate and the House reserved its rights under the Constitution and the only precedent established in respect of these two constitutional questions would appear to be that the wisest judgment is not to make any judgment at all. (*Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 174, p. 1764.)

[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 174, pp. 2274 and 2343.

question of preference dealt with separately in a "non-party spirit", said that the soldier was being made a plaything of party politics and he could see nothing but "flag-wagging" in the Senate amendment. "The Senate appeared to consider that the time had arrived when it should strike a blow at the Government and it seized this opportunity to do so by extensively amending this bill." Towards the end of the debate in committee, Curtin, who had hitherto kept a lofty tone and expressed only concern to reach a reasonable outcome, was moved to speak "very plainly":

> I say to the committee and the country that I consider that the amendment which has been made in the Senate is a part of a general policy which has recently been applied in the Senate of changing and resisting legislation emerging from the House of Representatives in order that the Opposition, which is not strong enough in this Chamber to defeat the Government, may be supplemented by an Opposition force in another place which may seek to destroy the Government.

Curtin denied that his own amendment to the Senate's amendment was trying to "fight the devil with his own fire" (Cameron's taunt) and claimed that it was "an attempt to provide a bridge". He said that the matter had developed owing to a political situation and he had attempted to deal with it in order to end that situation so that the parliament could go about the "paramount business, namely the immediate prosecution of the war". More emotionally he spoke of his endeavour to serve the country and to make parliament workable. Parliament ought either "to endeavour to meet the difficulties of the Government or get another Government".

Curtin's amendment to the Senate amendment was agreed to by a majority of only one, Coles voting with the Opposition. When the Senate refused to accept it, Curtin did not insist on his amendment and thus all the Senate's amendments to the Bill were accepted.[2] The Senate had won again and once more Curtin had avoided both a parliamentary crisis and the possibility of disunity in his own party. He did encounter some criticism from a section of Labour. Labour prestige, it was alleged, was being destroyed.

Yet the Opposition had not gained full marks. Opinion about its objective and its tactics was divided. The *Sydney Morning Herald* in a series of leading articles deplored any action which risked a premature election. Others saw merit in the actions as a move to restore the Senate's prestige; some applauded signs of a more vigorous opposition to the Government. While it is doubtful whether the Senate was really trying to force an early election and while it may have been only risking a dissolution in order to embarrass the Government, there was a difference of opinion in the Opposition about its actions. Fadden, speaking at the meeting of Opposition parties over the deadlock on the Income Tax Rates Bill and the National Welfare Bill, warned his audience that "Opposition parties must be unified and . . . the Senate Opposition must be guided on major issues by decisions of all members of the Opposition parties".[3] It

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 174, pp. 2501-54, 2581 and 2593.
[3] *Canberra Times*, 19 Mar 1943.

was noticeable that both in the Senate and the House of Representatives the leading speakers for the Opposition had been from the U.A.P.

When Parliament resumed on 21st June, the Opposition moved to a more direct form of attack by moving a vote of no-confidence. This move had been approved at an Opposition meeting on the 20th. Before the House met, Nairn, who had continued as Speaker after the change of Government in 1941 in order to enable the Curtin Government to have a majority on the floor, resigned his office and took his seat as a private member. Prowse[4] (Country Party), the Chairman of Committees, did the same. The House elected Rosevear to the Speakership and Clark[5] to the Chairmanship.

In the no-confidence debate the Opposition tried to make its first gallop on a dead horse. It denounced Labour for not agreeing to join a national government. They alleged that this refusal had meant the loss of all chances of unity in the country.

A more convincing show was made in the rest of the attack. The Government, said Fadden, had no mandate from the people for its "socialist" schemes. Within the Labour Party there was conflict over policy. Criticism was aimed particularly at Ward, and at the Government's failure to subdue "industrial lawlessness". Inadequate manpower had been provided for rural industries; inflation had been allowed to grow unchecked. And, finally, the Government was assailed for its part in the "Brisbane Line" incident.

The no-confidence motion was defeated in the early morning of the 24th after three days of uninterrupted debate.

When the House met again that afternoon, members plunged once more into a discussion of the Brisbane Line.[6] Despite Curtin's unequivocal statement that no document was missing and Ward's acceptance of Curtin's and Forde's assurances, there was no chance of the episode being ended, for Ward once more repeated charges against the former Prime Minister. Fadden, Spender, Holt, Cameron and others rose indignantly in reply. Curtin made some attempt to rejoin, but the Opposition clamoured for a Royal Commission, and Fadden gave notice that he would move for one next day. The House turned to the formal business of Additional Estimates, but the Speaker was compelled to caution every member who spoke, against attempts to continue the discussion of the "Brisbane Line" as part of the Estimates debate. Finally Curtin made the only move likely to check discussion. A few minutes after 8 o'clock he announced that a Royal Commission would be appointed; that he would consult the Leader of the Opposition on its membership; and that Ward had been relieved of his administrative duties until the commission's report should be tabled. "I hope that this question can now be resolved entirely upon its merits," he concluded, "and I invite the House to constitute a Committee of Supply."

The Treasurer proceeded to explain why an additional £20,000,000 was needed; Spooner examined the proposals at length; and as speaker followed

[4] J. H. Prowse. MHR 1922-43. B. Adelong, NSW, 16 Jun 1871. Died 20 May 1944.
[5] J. J. Clark, CBE. MHR 1934-69. B. Coonamble, NSW, 29 Jul 1897.
[6] See also Appendix 4.

speaker the vigour of the House flagged. When Curtin entered the Chamber some time before 11 o'clock to move the adjournment there were many empty seats. His announcement was to prove momentous for the future of his hearers. Referring to those measures which he considered essential, and for the need of their quick passage through Parliament, he continued:

> I should like to add that in my view this Parliament has about exhausted its resources for constructive legislation. I believe that it must be palpable to everybody that when we have passed the necessary measures . . . the question of the capacity of this Parliament to continue to serve the country might be submitted to a higher tribunal. . . . When the measures which are vital to the carrying on of public administration and the conduct of the war have been passed I would then be disposed to give advice in accordance with the sentiments I have just expressed.[7]

The Sixteenth Parliament set about tidying up the remaining legislation, and preparing for its end.

It had been a complex, but, from a political point of view, extraordinarily interesting two years. In his valedictory Curtin called it a "period of great difficulty for any government" and Fadden said more bluntly: "The position of the Parliament has been unsatisfactory ever since it was elected, and for that fact the electors themselves are entirely responsible." The electors should give "a definite mandate to a government that will have sufficient numerical strength to carry out the mandate in the interests of Australia. . . ."[8]

Within the Labour Party diversity of view continued. Facing the realities of office the moderates had gained added arguments both for their views and for the overriding need for unity of the party. The conscription issue was dying, but there were still those within the movement who mourned the outcome. Moves to extend the powers of the Commonwealth had revealed that in some situations loyalty to party policy was not as strong as regard for State rights. Various items of domestic policy were still open to objection from sections of the movement even if the Government thought them essential for war or post-war reconstruction. There was opposition to liquor restrictions. The industrial wing was opposed to preference for soldiers and insisted that compulsory unionism was the party's policy. The left-wing campaigned for a more vigorous introduction of Labour's policy of socialisation. The moderates—and these included the Prime Minister and his Treasurer—preferred to keep to the middle of the road, but incurred criticism within the movement by doing so.

Despite his return to the official Labour Party, Lang still followed an independent line in New South Wales. He led a vehement anti-conscription campaign; and ultimately in June 1943 the annual New South Wales Conference expelled him. He was unabashed and prepared to contest the Federal seat of Reid. As before he continued to denounce the Communists.

The Communist question habitually tended to become more prominent with the approach of elections. The ban on the party had been lifted in

[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, p. 353.
[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, pp. 703-4.

December 1942,[9] ostensibly in the name of freedom of speech and freedom of the individual, and after the party had given "satisfactory undertakings guaranteeing assistance in war production and in preventing stoppages and absenteeism".[1] The ban on their newspapers was lifted in March, and in June licences to publish newspapers in four Australian capitals were issued. In South Australia where there had been some newspaper campaigning against the party this last action was bitterly resented, as a "flagrant breach of the Government's undertaking to legitimate newspapers", in particular over newsprint rationing.[2]

Most important of the Communist Party's activities, however, had been the attempts to persuade the Labour movement to agree to a "united front". When the party appeared again officially it openly approached various State Labour branches, and made some headway in New South Wales. There they won over the local Trades and Labour Council, and at the annual A.L.P. conference in June a motion was presented "welcoming efforts of all organisations and parties to assist the Labour Government in the war effort and against fascism. . . ."[3] But the motion was defeated and the "traditional policy of opposition to the Communist Party" was reaffirmed by a large majority. Other States commented favourably on this outcome, and Fallon, the Federal President of the A.L.P., criticised the "united front" proposals. The Communists, who had supported conscription, were seen by Calwell as the influence behind New South Wales endorsement of the Government's conscription policy. Chandler, a Communist, and secretary of the New South Wales branch, announced that in his criticism Fallon did not speak on behalf of the Labour Party, and that many unions supported a united front. In general, however, the Labour Party rejected the Communists, but they were unable to shake off the embarrassment of a patronage which continued to be given despite their efforts to disown it.

For the parties opposing Labour the disintegration which had begun, even before the Sixteenth Parliament, was almost complete. Lacking a strong idea to weld them, confronted by an adversary which made skilful use of its chief weapon—leadership in a national crisis—the parties had also fallen into personal conflicts. Fadden, as the accepted leader of the Opposition, was a member of the weaker partner in the coalition and had little chance of healing the differences inside the stronger partner. or escaping the U.A.P. jealousy of his office. The U.A.P. obviously had reached the limits of its descent, short of complete disappearance from the active political scene. The leader of the U.A.P., Hughes, was not accepted by many as other than a stop-gap. As at other periods of party political confusion there were a number of attempts to produce new parties, all of a non-Labour colour, whose very existence was a sign not only

[9] See *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, p. 591.
[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 49, p. 13.
[2] *Advertiser*, 7 Jun.
[3] Conference Proceedings, p. 2.

of criticism of the Curtin Government but of dissatisfaction with the Opposition.

In such an atmosphere the politically active section of the Australian populace moved towards an election campaign.

5—THE 1943 ELECTIONS

Electioneering had begun almost as soon as Curtin made his announcement, but the formal campaign opened with the policy speech of the Leader of the Opposition at Brisbane on 22nd July, followed four days later, at Toowoomba, with other details of rural policy, in a separate speech made by him as leader of the Country Party. Among practical issues Fadden emphasised the need for a national government; the formation of one army; the need to revise and reduce restrictions and regulations; and, in finance, the need for a system of post-war credits which amounted to a refund, after the war, of portion of tax paid. On more general matters he claimed that the Government had subordinated national interests to socialistic theories; had failed to resolve industrial anarchy; and had failed to halt inflation.

Menzies spoke on the following night, but repudiated that portion of Fadden's speech which was concerned with post-war credits. In his view, he said later, the proposal and that of 1941[4] were not the same because in 1941 post-war credits had been a means of going beyond what might otherwise have been thought the limits of ordinary taxation. But "since that date the Labour Government has substantially increased taxation".

There were angry exchanges between the two men; Fadden described the speech as "a stab in the back"; Menzies asserted that there had been no hint of refunding taxation in the thirty-one points previously announced by Fadden. Hughes merely commented that Fadden was "leader of the Opposition parties, and the policy he had laid down is the policy of the parties he leads, and there I leave it". Spicer and Leckie, U.A.P. Senators from Victoria, supported Menzies. The further disruption of non-Labour parties on the eve of an election provided fuel for Curtin's policy speech which followed on the 26th.

Some days before the decision to seek an election, the Prime Minister had made a statement to the effect that the defensive phase of the war was over. "The holding war imposed upon us in circumstances of great difficulty has been an obligation under global strategy which has been discharged"; and though the country was not yet immune from marauding raids he believed that the country could be held "as a base from which to launch both limited and major offensives against Japan". In his policy speech Curtin, "as head of the Government which for twenty months has had the solemn duty and grave responsibility of maintaining intact our country" was able to claim credit for this progress towards winning the war. Labour campaigners made the most of Curtin as the leader responsible for these achievements, and the 1943 election campaign speeches did

[4] See *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp. 512-13.

much to promote the thesis that the Labour Party had saved the nation from defeat.

In his opening speech Curtin said that for the war effort the Government's policy would in future aim at "balance". Churchill and Roosevelt had given assurances on the vigorous prosecution of the war in the Pacific theatre, and Australia could look to them for assistance in those things for which her capacity was insufficient and concentrate on those for which she was particularly fitted such as the production of food. The country's war effort "must be within its physical capacity to fulfil. . . . It is only misleading . . . to undertake commitments which we cannot fulfil on time." Associating these statements with the country's war economy, Curtin announced that attention could now be given to the industries depressed because of earlier war demands, in particular the primary industries.

As vigorously as Labour claimed credit for all the achievements of the previous twenty months, it laid the blame for all failures at the door of its predecessors. It also exploited the divisions among its opponents. "You cannot risk a government from the U.A.P. and the Country Party which would make the same terrible mistake it made before Japan came into the war. . . . Who would be the boss among them all? Who would be the leader of leaders?" "The Labour Government is the victory government . . . it has a positive record—the security of this nation over the last twenty months." Its policy, in a phrase, was "victory in war, victory for the peace". It was a ringing appeal, and was made clearer by the absence of any competing call. Labour took up the cry that Curtin must be returned and the country must be united behind Curtin.[5]

New parties appeared. The One Parliament for Australia Movement had A. W. Anderson, a sausage manufacturer, as its founder and leader, and on 24th July it was reported to be going to contest every seat in New South Wales. Its pronouncements indicated an intense but somewhat unpractical approach to the problems of government. Others which put up candidates included the Australian Women's Party, Commonwealth Party, National Unity, Women for Canberra Movement, Middle Class Party. Sometimes a candidate was the sole candidate of his party in the Commonwealth.

The result, on 21st August 1943, proved to be a landslide for Labour:

	Total seats in each State	Labour		U.A.P.-U.C.P.		Independent	
		1940	1943	1940	1943	1940	1943
N.S.W.	28	16	21	12	7		
Victoria	20	9	9	9	9	2*	2*
Queensland	10	6	6	4	4		
South Australia	6	1	5	5	1		
Western Australia	5	2	5	3	—		
Tasmania	5	2	3	3	2		
	74	36	49	36	23	2	2

* Coles (Henty) and Wilson (Wimmera) have been regarded as Independents in both elections, although Wilson was an endorsed Country Party candidate.

[5] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 62, p. 10.

The two Victorian Independents, Coles and Wilson, who had voted Labour into power in October 1941 retained their seats, Wilson easily, Coles after preference votes had been distributed. Labour did not run a candidate against Wilson. Against the Government's 49 the Opposition could muster only 23—14 United Australia Party and 9 United Country Party. They had lost Eden-Monaro, Hume, Martin, Parkes and Robertson in New South Wales; Lilley in Queensland; Adelaide, Boothby, Grey and Wakefield in South Australia; Forrest, Perth and Swan in Western Australia; and Denison in Tasmania; fourteen seats in all.

The Labour Party lost Maranoa in Queensland by a slightly smaller margin than that with which they had won it in September 1940. Blackburn, who had stood as an Independent A.L.P. candidate for his old seat of Bourke in Victoria, lost to the endorsed Labour candidate, Bryson:[6] and so party discipline and the party pledge triumphed. The swing had occurred in three States: New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia; and less dramatically in Tasmania.

Before the elections few expected that Labour would carry the Senate; the voting revealed a notable swing in all States.[7] As a result of their success they would eventually have a majority of eight in the new Senate (after 1st July 1944) in place of a minority of two.

In the Senate Miss Dorothy Tangney[8] (Labour, Western Australia) became the first woman Senator and in the House of Representatives Dame Enid Lyons[9] (widow of a former Prime Minister) won Darwin in Tasmania for the U.A.P. and became the first woman member of that chamber.

Curtin himself had a personal triumph in Fremantle where his previous slender majority was replaced by a vote four times the size of that gained by his next opponent, F. R. Lee, an Independent Nationalist, who had stood against him in 1940. Some reasons for the swing could be accepted as obvious. Chief among them was the personal prestige of Curtin. Not only as the national leader had he appealed to many not usually committed to a Labour vote, but as a party leader he represented the moderate

[6] W. G. Bryson. MHR 1943-46 and 1949-55. B. Maldon, Vic, 14 Feb 1898.

[7] SENATE ELECTIONS
First Preference Votes

	A.L.P. Group		U.A.P.-U.C.P.		Other Groups and Independents		Total Votes Including Informal	
	1940	1943	1940	1943	1940	1943		
New South Wales	757,941	813,527	604,460	489,892	30,533	175,858	1,575,949	1,680,329
Victoria	440,380	585,374	568,172	506,018	28,767	32,991	1,138,426	1,229,535
Queensland	236,218	322,908	288,495	184,181	11,318	47,676	565,914	598,254
South Australia	140,642	209,177	181,897	148,419	7,018	—	359,000	386,160
Western Australia	83,676	139,208	126,414	101,738	13,167	5,918	246,728	268,261
Tasmania	49,167	68,970	61,700	51,315	2,852	—	130,786	139,116
Total for six States	1,708,024	2,139,164	1,831,138	1,481,563	93,655	262,443	4,016,803	4,301,655
Total for five States excluding N.S.W.	950,083	1,325,637	1,226,678	991,671	63,122	86,585		

[8] Dame Dorothy Tangney, DBE. Senator 1943-66. B. Perth, 13 Mar 1911.

[9] Dame Enid Lyons, GBE. MHR 1943-51; Vice-President Executive Council 1949-51. B. Leesville, Tas, 9 Jul 1897.

section of Labour policy. He "lifted his own side to a dignified level and tried hard to move it to the middle of the road with promises of moderation that must make the Sydney Trades Hall shiver".[1] Much of the Opposition attack had been directed at Ward, and the militant section of the Labour movement; but it seems doubtful whether any of it rebounded on Curtin, and Curtin acquired either credit for loyalty in not breaking with Ward or sympathy over the embarrassment Ward caused him. Labour had gone into the election with a bold account of their twenty months of office and confidently invited the electors to put Labour back to continue their government for "victory".

But the result could not be explained wholly in these terms. To a degree which it was difficult to estimate the result was an answer to the sentiments expressed by Fadden in his valedictory: that the people should return a government with a workable mandate. The vote was for what seemed to the electorate to offer the best existing chance of some sort of political stability as opposed to the strife of faction.

A feature of the election had been the multiplicity of candidates, and, in some States, of parties. Altogether 339 candidates contested the 74 (voting) seats in the Lower House: 140 (for 28) in New South Wales, 95 (for 20) in Victoria, 38 (for 10) in Queensland, 18 (for 6) in South Australia, 26 (for 5) in Western Australia and 22 (for 5) in Tasmania. In Martin in New South Wales no less than eleven names appeared on the voting paper, and thirteen seats in New South Wales and Victoria had six or seven candidates apiece. Perth in Western Australia had nine. The appearance of numerous Independent candidates was seen as an expression of public concern over the state of political life. Of the 108 Independents (excluding those for the Northern Territory) 17 had party affiliations, and there were, in addition, a number of unendorsed party candidates. But Independents did not poll well.

Nor did the new parties have any success, and Spooner, speaking at the declaration of the poll in Robertson, where he had been beaten, summed up the effect of these parties, all but one of which were of a non-Labour character. A multiplicity of candidates and numbers of parties was all right in theory, he said, but "in practice it is a presentation to the Labour Party. It deepens the suggestion of disunity and ineffectiveness among the parties other than Labour. It confuses the public mind and it diminishes the value of the vote that is cast against the Labour Party."[2] The One Parliament for Australia Group (17 in New South Wales, 1 in Victoria, 5 in Queensland), the Liberal Democrats (9 in New South Wales) and the Services' and Citizens' Party (4 in Victoria, 1 in New South Wales) presented the most candidates, among the new parties. The first was chiefly represented in country electorates.

An analysis of the voting revealed the minor part they played and the extent to which they and the Independents dissipated the first-preference vote.

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[1] Keith Murdoch, *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 28 Aug.
[2] Reported in *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 23 Aug.



Australian War Memorial

Members of the new Labour Government photographed on the lawns of Government House, Canberra on 24th September 1943: (*front row*) Mr Makin, Mr Beasley, Mr Chifley, Mr Curtin, Lord Gowrie, Mr Forde, Dr Evatt, Senator Collings, Senator Keane; (*back row*) Mr Lazzarini, Mr Holloway, Senator Ashley, Mr Ward, Mr Drakeford, Senator Cameron, Mr Dedman, Mr Scully, Mr Frost, Senator Fraser, Mr Calwell.



Australian War Memorial

Grass and weeds growing in air raid trenches at Jolimont Park, Melbourne in October 1943. As the threat to Australia lessened, air raid precautions were relaxed and air raid shelters and trenches were neglected and fell into disrepair.

	1940 %	1943 %
Labour	40.2	50.0
Other Labour	7.8	.9
U.A.P.	31.1	16.1
Country Party	13.8	8.4
Country-Nationals		4.0
Country-Liberals		3.5
Independents	7.0	11.1
O.P.F.A.		1.8
Services' and Citizens'		.5
Middle Class Organisation		.5
Liberal Democrats		1.0
Communist		2.1

In effect in 1940 the vote outside the established parties was 7 per cent; in 1943 it was 17 per cent.

The rejection of the Independents and of the new parties strengthens the view that the need for political stability was the dominating influence on the voters. Before the elections there had been considerable emphasis on the merit of voting for Independents, or for the best men in each of the parties. The implication was that a group of successful Independents could hold the balance of power and compel the formation of a National Government, or that the best men in the established parties could get together and form a National Government. In a series of articles the *Sydney Morning Herald* exhorted its readers to choose the "best men" regardless of party; and the *Age* in Melbourne followed much the same line.

But the results had to be regarded as a justification of the view, borne out, of course, by the overwhelming vote for a party committed to a single-party course and the rejection of any National Government, that the Australian people were not influenced by any pleas about the need for an all-party government in wartime.

Of the National Service Group Duncan-Hughes, Price and Stacey in South Australia, and Beck in Tasmania lost their seats. Cameron and Menzies retained theirs, and Harrison survived after preferences had been counted. Senator Spicer from Victoria was defeated.

In his opening speech Curtin had firmly rejected any association with the Communists, and during the campaign he pointed to Communists who were standing against Labour candidates as proof that there was no substance in the alleged "united front" between the Communists and the Labour Party. Communist behaviour varied, of course, according to what was most opportune for the party; the less cooperative section of Labour receiving less support than, for instance, official Labour candidates in New South Wales. Communist candidates numbered 5 in New South Wales, 5 in Victoria, 1 in Queensland, 2 in South Australia, 1 in Western Australia, and 2 in Tasmania, but nomination of candidates was less important in its effect on the public attitude to Labour than the general policy they outlined, which was to endorse Labour's election programme, and to call for "unity of the Labour movement and national unity behind the Labour Government".

In a last appeal to the electors Curtin had called the election "the most momentous . . . in the history of Australia" for three reasons: that the elected government would have to direct the coming offensive against Japan; it would be responsible for Australia's part in the peace conference; and it would be responsible for demobilisation and post-war reconstruction. These tasks now lay in the hands of Curtin's own government. In his policy speech he had also declared the aim of a balanced war effort.

CHAPTER 7

THE BALANCED WAR EFFORT, OCTOBER 1943 TO JUNE 1944

1—NEW CONDITIONS

TOWARDS the end of 1943 and early in 1944 the chronicle of the civilian side of the war effort becomes more and more a description of administrative machinery. Somewhere battles are being fought, somewhere an enemy is still being opposed, but on the home front most of the talk is of priorities, production programmes, manpower releases, screening of demands, reviews and allocations. The piles of documents mount, the army of public servants grows larger, committees spawn new committees.

Through the mass of paper and the multitude of clerks that began to silt up the war effort can still be discerned two streams of Australian administrative effort. On the civil side is the persistent attempt to push a way through the conflicting claims on manpower to the ideal of a balanced war effort. On the military side is the hope still to participate in offensive operations and the endeavour to find the appropriate way in which this ambition can be achieved. Gradually, too, a third stream appears, an offshoot perhaps of the thwarted ambition to take part in the higher direction of the war—a stream of activity which seeks its outlet in international affairs in a more general sense than membership of a wartime alliance.

The Australian Government had arrived at a point where it could no longer hope to determine a fixed course of Australian policy but had to reconcile the various courses on which it was impelled by its own desires and by influences from the outside world. Its chief practical task for a large part of the year 1944 was to balance the demands of the Australian forces for men and material, the demands of the United States forces for food, general supplies, works and services, the commitments to the United Kingdom for foodstuffs, and the essential needs of the Australian civilian population. A person engaged in a feat of balancing becomes more interested in equilibrium than in progress.

From October 1943 onwards the records of the War Cabinet reveal much less concern with higher strategy than they had previously shown. Ministers settled down to the handling of administrative routine and the discussion of matters solely affecting Australia. From November 1943 to June 1944 there is not a single minute recording any significant decision relating to higher policy. The War Cabinet's agenda dealt with munitions, aircraft and ship building programmes, details of administration of the Australian forces, procedures for the approval of expenditures, the placing of orders and the assignment of production. The major decisions taken by the War Cabinet during this period related to details of the allocation

of Australian forces, Australia's commitments to the United States forces and claims for manpower. The main differences of opinion and the major pressure that came from below concerned procedure and departmental responsibility. The "departmental view" became a more usual term than the "over-all objective". Whenever one sinks a shaft into the administration one forms the impression of a number of able but limited men doing their own tasks with enthusiasm and devotion in their separate tunnels.

Gradually they converged on daylight. Post-war reconstruction eventually gave direction and higher purpose to their labours and the final singleness of policy and a higher purpose was found in Australia in preparations for the peace and reconstruction after peace. Early in 1944 the War Cabinet had started modestly enough to think of such matters as reconstruction training for the discharged members of the services and the disposal of surplus stores, and they even gave more than one meeting to consider what shirts, socks and civilian suits should be supplied to discharged soldiers and whether the Government should design the dresses to be given to discharged servicewomen or, having regard to the multitudinous variety of womanly charm, give each girl a five pound note to deck herself. Gradually, too, as each of the administrative tunnellers started to think of the effect of his wartime work on post-war affairs they started to discover common answers.

The Government showed clear signs of being bothered by demands of various kinds and of temporarily not being able to see the "over-all picture". Certainly a good deal of the material being forced under notice by its advisers and administrators did not assist it in any degree to determine what was of greater and what was of lesser importance. Expansion of the aircraft industry was pressed on it with the same enthusiasm as post-war export opportunities in the Pacific; the difficulties of the dairying industry were represented as convincingly as those of harvesting the sugar crop or fighting the Japanese, and neither yielded in persuasiveness to the case put forward for this or that item to be supplied under reciprocal lend-lease; the contention over some detail of the administrative machinery was carried on with all the vigour, ingenuity and skill in negotiation that is customarily associated with high affairs of State.

Meanwhile, during this period, at the heart of Allied strategy and without any Australian participation, a series of conferences were held that set the course for the remainder of the war.

From 19th to 24th August Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt conferred in Quebec, "under the impression of Italy's approaching surrender".[1] The primary importance of the cross-Channel invasion of Europe was reiterated, the target date (1st May 1944) confirmed, and agreement reached that the commander of that vast operation would be an American.

In Italy the advance was not to be continued beyond the Ancona-Pisa line, and there were discussions of possible landings in southern France.

[1] W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War,* Vol V (1952), p. 75.

There was considerable discussion of the future of the Far East and the Pacific.

In their report at Quebec the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved proposals of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff for operations in the Pacific. So far as the South-West Pacific Area was concerned these provided that Rabaul was to be neutralised rather than captured, eastern New Guinea including the Admiralty Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago was to be seized or neutralised, and the advance was to be continued along the north coast of New Guinea "by step-by-step airborne-waterborne advances". In Burma the plan was to capture upper Burma in order to improve communications with China. The high command in that area was to be reorganised by separating the command in India from that in South-East Asia. The South-East Asia Command would be placed under a British Supreme Allied Commander with an American deputy. On 25th August the appointment was announced of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, formerly Chief of Combined Operations, as Supreme Allied Commander. The Deputy was Lieut-General Joseph W. Stilwell.

Italy signed her surrender on 3rd September, the day on which the Allied forces crossed the Strait of Messina to the mainland, but the announcement of the armistice was withheld until the 8th, the day on which a further Allied invasion of the mainland was made at Salerno with Naples as its objective. By that time it was clear that there would be continued strong resistance by German troops in Italy.

These developments were carried a stage further at the meeting of foreign ministers at Moscow from 19th to 30th October. Here the intention to open a cross-Channel operation in May 1944 was re-affirmed, but with reservations resulting from the need to reconsider allocations of divisions, and of landing craft.

Such military discussions were not public property; the decisions on more general matters of future United Nations policy were. A declaration on general security covered the continued collaboration of the three Powers in peacetime, and the establishment of machinery for international consultation; to study these questions a European Advisory Commission was to be set up.[2] Austria was to be liberated from German domination; the aim of the Allies was to be the destruction of Fascism, and thereafter democratic government of the Italian people should be restored; and Germans responsible for atrocities were to be sent back to the scene of their crimes for trial.

The next series of high-level conferences began with meetings at Cairo from 22nd to 26th November. The British and American leaders and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek were present. The British and American leaders travelled from Cairo to Teheran for a conference with the Russians, which lasted from 28th November to 1st December, and then returned to Cairo where meetings continued from 3rd to 7th December.

At Teheran Marshal Stalin announced that it would be impossible

[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 68, pp. 6-8; Evatt, 3 Nov 1943.

for Russia to join in the fight against Japan until after Germany's collapse, "then they would march together". The Russians were informed quite unequivocally that the invasion of Western Europe would be launched in May in conjunction with a supporting operation against the south of France.[3]

The resumed conference in Cairo was mainly concerned with the allocation of resources to the offensives against Germany and the choice of a commander. As for Japan, the Americans insisted on the abandonment of a plan of the South-East Asia Command to seize the Andaman Islands, and it was agreed that "the main effort against Japan should be made in the Pacific". There, it was agreed, the aim should be to advance along the New Guinea-Netherlands East Indies-Philippine axis and to complete the capture of the Japanese Mandated Islands in time to launch a major assault in the Formosa-Luzon-China area in the spring of 1945.[4]

As a result of the surrender of Italy the bulk of the British Mediterranean Fleet could be spared for operations against Japan. Detailed plans for the employment of the fleet against Japan and for the deployment of British forces generally against Japan after the defeat of Germany were now being considered.

The public declaration after the Cairo Conference set out the aims in the Pacific of the Allies who were fighting Japan: they coveted no territorial expansion, but they intended that Japan should be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she had occupied since the beginning of the 1914-18 war, as well as those territories taken from the Chinese; in due course Korea was to become free and independent; and the three Powers pledged themselves to persevere in operations to procure the unconditional surrender of Japan.

In all this the Australian Government had no part. In public Ministers put a brave face on it and represented themselves as having been more fully informed of the discussions than in fact they were, but later it became a stock grievance of Dr Evatt that the Cairo declaration in particular had been made without reference to Australia although it vitally concerned the theatre of operations in which Australia was most actively engaged.

Failure to consult Australia on strategy in the Pacific developed into a strong grievance. Failure to consult Australia about Europe was resented as an indication that Australia was not to have a due share in the shaping of the peace and the post-war world. At this time Evatt developed a theme

[3] The discussions at these conferences are set out in detail in J. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol V (1956), in the British official series *History of the Second World War.*

[4] "Though the Joint Chiefs believed that the Central Pacific route of advance was strategically, logistically, and tactically better than the Southwest Pacific route, they also decided that it would be most wasteful of time and resources to move all the Allied forces from the Southwest and South Pacific Areas out of the firm contact with the Japanese established during the campaign for the reduction of Rabaul. The Joint Chiefs held that the employment of both routes would prevent the Japanese from knowing where and when the next blow was to fall. It was also believed that the Australian Government would react unfavorably to redirection of all Allied effort to the Central Pacific. If the Southwest Pacific offensive were curtailed, Australia might well let down in its war effort, an action which would result in a drag on all operations throughout the Pacific." R. R. Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines* (1953), pp. 5-6, a volume in the official series *United States Army in World War II.*

which remained constant with him that Australia by the contribution of her forces to the winning of the war had won a right not merely to be heard but to take an active part in making the peace. "Australia has done its fair share in putting out the fire which was kindled in Europe," said Evatt. "Our right to take a full and active part in the planning of the peace—not merely to be heard—should be assured to us."[5] It was a theme that was to be repeated crescendo at the United Nations Conference on International Organisation in 1945.

The decision to set up a European Advisory Commission was applauded, but while the realities in Europe might dictate that these decisions were made by three governments only, "they are not to be taken as indicating an intention to set up an exclusive three-power management for Europe; and other United Nations, including other members of the British Commonwealth, have certainly the fullest right to expect that the final execution of the Moscow agreements will not be undertaken without prior reference to them and agreement by them".[6] The War Cabinet, discussing the declaration relating to the future of Japan issued by the Cairo Conference, referred specially to the absence of any prior consultation with the Commonwealth Government in regard to the declared policy which was of direct concern to Australia.[7]

In decisions on the actual conduct of the war the Australian Government took no part; they were the exclusive province of that higher direction which had come to be vested in the person of Churchill and Roosevelt.

The might of the Allies was, for the future, still to be directed primarily at Germany. In England the grand plan of invasion took shape in the massing and training of the British and American divisions, the design and construction of unique equipment, and all the infinite detail involved in a military operation, the concept of which dwarfed anything thus far attempted in war.

On the Australian home front, although danger had lessened, discomfort had increased. The demands on Australian physical resources brought about by decisions in which the Australian Government had no part meant that demands for sacrifice of things other than life were growing. The human side of the Government's major problem of manpower reveals pictures both of hardship endured and of shady evasion. Some of the signs of the splitting of the community begin to appear. Envy of those in uniform who had never been in a place of danger but had access to a canteen for cigarettes and liquor went side by side with some resentment at the self-importance of the salaried potentates who were giving or refusing permits for this and that, and with total jealousy of the man who had somehow or other managed to do well out of the war either with a better job or a soft lurk. Those men who were kept in uniform in circumstances that made them fret at inaction wondered about those who

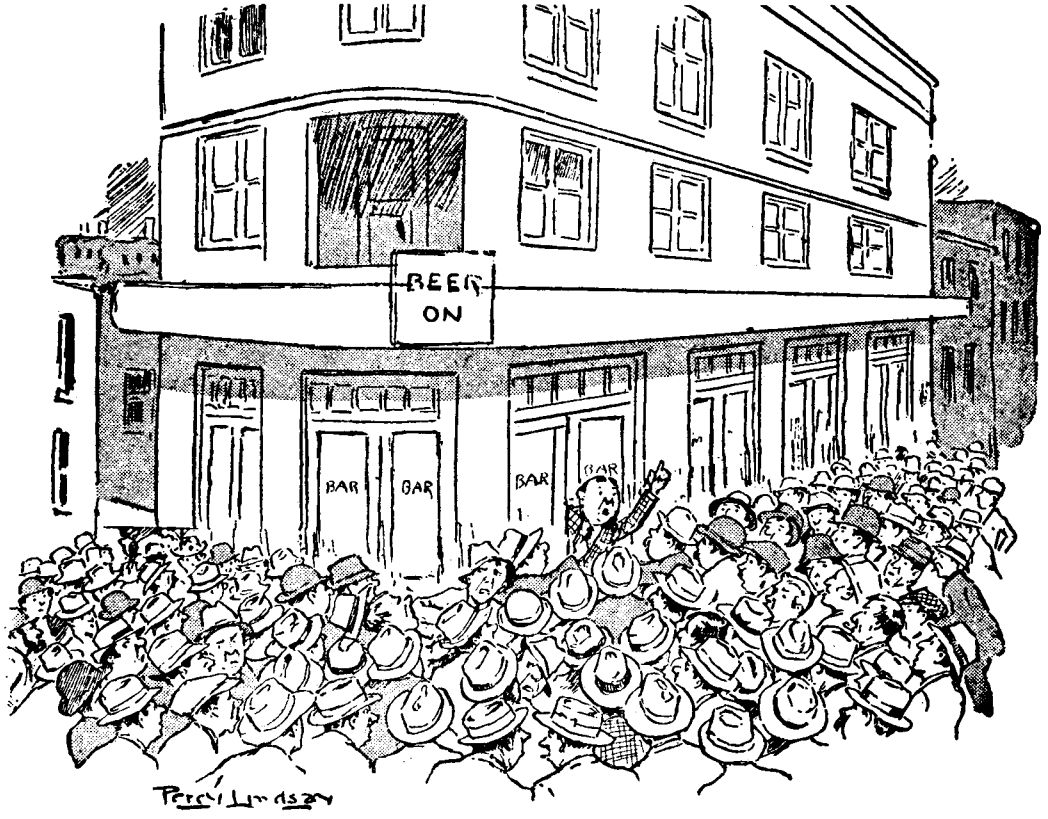
[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, p. 570, 14 Oct 1943.
[6] *Current Notes*, Vol XIV, No. 9, p. 318.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 3219, 21 Dec.

had been "manpowered out" into a better-paid job than soldiering. Some got the best of both worlds by doing a non-combatant's work in an officer's uniform. The newly-inducted members of the Public Service had found a life in which a tradition of serving the public was giving place to the business of controlling the public. Yet the man who at his desk would decide who should get this or that might himself be seen lingering on a footpath until a grocer's shop was empty so that he might have a chance of getting a packet of cigarettes from under the counter as a special favour.

In Australia shortages were accepted by most as the lot of the civilian, but supplies "on the black" found a ready market. As ever, the housewife was the most keenly affected, and in particular the young women who sought to marry and set up a home in wartime. The shortage of houses had become sufficiently acute to persuade Dedman, as Minister for War Organisation of Industry, that his department should look into the chances, however slight, of relaxing the controls on building, and of releasing suitable manpower. War workers were being housed in temporary structures, in hostels, and in "sleep-outs"—detached one-room structures in suburban back gardens. Domestic refrigerators were almost unprocurable because they were needed by the forces and by essential civilian services. Furniture manufacturers were now restricted to "utility" styles; cutlery was hard to get; household linen had been rationed since June. People turned to the second-hand dealer whose trade had never before been so brisk, and in whose windows appeared articles which in other times would have been thrown out as unsaleable.

Salesmen had become ill-tempered. Supplies were short. And though privately the customer might complain of the arrogance of some particular shopkeeper, he swallowed the affront. Black-market manufacture and traffic in a variety of goods were known and, sometimes, detected. Indeed there was mounting Government concern over the persistence of black-market transactions: a committee reported the difficulties in obtaining convictions and the inadequacy of penalties. A special Commonwealth Court was announced.

Indeed, as shortages, particularly of drink and tobacco, became more acute black marketing became more profitable and attracted and nourished an increasing body of criminals. A member of the staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, writing after a week's investigation of Sydney's black markets, reported that adulterated Scotch whisky was being sold by street pedlars for £4 and £5 a bottle and that these pedlars were links in a chain with its own road transport system between Melbourne and Sydney. Empty Scotch whisky bottles with labels and seals intact were bringing 5s. each. Motor-car tyres were being sold for about four times the fixed price. Cartons of American cigarettes were being hawked for £1 or £1.5s. The writer of the article, who had been in England during the greater part of 1942 and 1943, said that some officials admitted that the Government might have unwittingly contributed to the causes of black marketing



"There's room for one more."

Percy Lindsay in Bulletin *(Sydney) 12 Jul 1944*

"by excessive zeal in producing regulations or by inefficient distribution". "An enforcement officer," he added, "admitted that the black market in liquor would be less serious if Australia had followed the British example of making adequate supplies of beer available even in the darkest days of the U-boat blockade."[8]

At this stage, in crowded Brisbane for example, the beer was on tap in the bars for only two or three hours in the afternoon. The bars were crowded by 4 p.m., presumably mostly by men who had ceased work early so as not to miss the beer. It is probable that more man-hours were wasted in this way in the search for liquor and tobacco than were gained by reducing the number of people working in breweries and tobacco factories. Perhaps the severe restriction of these amenities was largely due to the existence at the top of a Prime Minister who regarded "austerity" as a positive good and of academic economists who omitted to take human factors into account.

The country saw the Government conducting a series of conferences with coal-miners, in which the miners presented, and the Government considered, a list of demands for the present and future organisation of the industry. The country read the Prime Minister's frank admission that consumption of coal was greater than supplies; lighting restrictions were imposed, not now as a military precaution, but to save fuel and power. But strikes in the coal industry, as in others, continued. City travellers walked when transport workers stopped for a day to discuss their grievances.

There were signs of social change. Newspapers reported increased juvenile crime. New controls were announced: photographic materials, ice cream, condensed and powdered milk and fresh cream, cocoa, chocolate and confectionery, some building materials such as asbestos sheets and processed wood, furniture and canvas ware, household utensils. But new controls were imposed less often than formerly and many of them were concerned with food. There was talk of meat rationing in October, and it began in January 1944.

The tide had even begun to set in the opposite direction, either in response to new demands for food (as when petrol rations were once more issued to pleasure boats because they might be used for fishing and so augment the supply), or in response to the passing of the most acute phase of the war. Schools occupied by the services were being returned to their former use in all States.[9] Despite continued exhortations to live frugally, to practise austerity, and, as in the previous Christmas, to restrict Christmas spending, there were signs that even the Government was prepared to relax a little. Lights were on again in areas south of Rockhampton (but not advertising signs); racing restrictions were lifted to permit a meeting on the first Saturday in each month; even the carriage of racehorses was once more discussed. The newspapers were permitted a 5 per cent increase in their newsprint ration.

[8] Keith Newman in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 and 5 Jul 1944.
[9] War Cabinet Minute 3117, 3 Nov 1943.

One minor indication of the more relaxed outlook was a decision of the War Cabinet, on the recommendation of the Defence Committee, that bulk petrol and oil storages, explosives depots and certain other installations need no longer be camouflaged and that the coastal area within which service installations generally should be camouflaged was to be bounded in the south by the Tropic of Capricorn instead of a line from Jervis Bay to Fremantle.[1]

On 8th December the War Cabinet reviewed the role of the Volunteer Defence Corps. Its strength was dwindling. Whereas in June 1942 3,609 were on full-time duty and 94,568 on part-time duty, in September 1943 the numbers were 2,511 and 85,675. The original role of the corps had been static defence of each unit's home district. This had now become a secondary task and the primary one was to be ready to man anti-aircraft batteries, coast defences and searchlights in an emergency. Other emergency tasks had been given to nine battalions north of the Tropic of Capricorn in Queensland and one battalion in Western Australia. The V.D.C. men on full-time duty were performing a variety of duties and their conditions of service were identical with those of the remainder of the army. The training time of part-time members averaged about six hours a week on night parades or at week-ends.

The War Cabinet adopted a series of recommendations by General Blamey concerning the corps. There was for the present to be no action to reduce the activities of the units; every practicable measure was to be taken to ensure that men charged with preparing to man anti-aircraft guns, searchlights and coast defences should become efficient; and the Prime Minister should make a statement making it clear to all that the war was not yet won and the V.D.C. would remain an integral part of the army filling a necessary role.[2]

In May 1944, however, it was decided to free members of the corps not engaged in the "primary role" from "a substantial portion of their responsibility for attendance at regular parades". This decision affected about half the members of the corps.

In November 1943 the Chief of the Naval Staff had informed the War Cabinet that there had been no attacks by submarines on Australian ships in Australian waters since 16th June; the successful operations against Rabaul had reduced the likelihood of attacks in southern waters. The Advisory War Council agreed to a recommendation that shipping south of Brisbane should no longer be escorted.[3]

As a result 28 ships were held up in Melbourne because of the refusal of the crews to sail unescorted. The Prime Minister on 21st December instructed that six of them were to be manned by naval crews.[4] Mr W. Bird, secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Seamen's Union, invited the naval authorities to explain to the seamen the reasons for the change. This

[1] War Cabinet Minute 3118, 3 Nov 1943.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 3118, 3 Nov 1943.
[3] Advisory War Council Minute 1249, 11 Nov 1943.
[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1275, 22 Dec 1943.

was done, and on 25th December it was announced that the seamen had returned to their ships.

On 4th February 1944 the War Cabinet approved a further recommendation of the Chief of the Naval Staff that in order to provide enough escort vessels for the protection of shipping in the waters of New Britain and northern New Guinea the coastal convoys operating between Sydney and Brisbane should be discontinued; but this time the maritime unions were to be informed before this action was taken.[5]

The period from the last quarter of 1943 until the end of the war might well be found by the future student of Australian social and political change to repay meticulous attention. The crisis of 1942 had jolted the Australian nation out of an accustomed way of life and the measures taken by the Government to meet that crisis had disturbed and jumbled together the customary relationships of people and institutions. No society can return to the old ways and re-erect itself on the old plan after such a disturbance. During late 1943 and 1944 the post-war social and political history of Australia begins.[6]

The decisions made on manpower and on industry in this period may well be found to have given a start or to have erected a barrier against this or that industry or this or that citizen. The methods introduced may have helped shape post-war attitudes and relationships. The expectations of benefits either for the individual or the group were stimulated. The relationships of government to the people were altered and the role of government in all aspects of the life of the community became more dominant. The ideas about who was important and who was worthy of respect, or at least worth cultivating, began to change radically. Secondary industry deepened its foundations; primary industry added some top storeys. Cultural influences broadened both with closer personal contact with Americans and with growing awareness that two foreign monsters of the past—Russia and China (at that time seen as the "democracy" founded by Sun Yat Sen)—were gallant and admirable allies. Communism was studied less for its content than it was respected for its inspiration of the defenders of Stalingrad, and, in some quarters, the classical ballet, founded under the Tsars, became the symbol of the artistic advancement that was possible only in the enlightened Soviets. The upsurge of interest in the ballet in Australia was one of the most marked artistic phenomenon of the day.

It is probable that the student of the future will find that the Labour Government of Australia was not fully aware of and that its intellectual advisers tended to misread the nature of the changes that were taking place and the nature of the situation that was likely to arise after the war. Among the politicians there was too simple a belief that the wartime

[5] War Cabinet Minute 3321, 4 Feb 1944.

[6] This paragraph and the following paragraphs should be read as having been written before 1951. As stated in the Preface, the author deliberately refrained from writing into this volume the experience of later years.

powers they exercised would be an acceptable standard for post-war government, too ready a disposition to believe that Labour had now been "given its chance" and that it ought to take the chance while it held good, too easy an assumption that both votes and powers, which the people had given to them because of the wartime situation, had been given to them on their merits as a political party. Consequent on their view that this was Labour's chance to establish itself, there was also the beginning of that post-war concentration on receiving the annual dividends of politics that was to make the Labour Party a conservative and, in some respects, a reactionary party rather than the visionary and radical party it believed itself to be. Perhaps a more penetrating historian of the Labour Party may find too, in 1943 and 1944, not only the first signs of the inability of the post-war Labour Party in Australia to think its way through the post-war political issues, but the consequent inability to decide on the way in which traditionalist and conservative elements in the party could be accommodated to the more radical and, indeed, revolutionary elements which had come from the discard to the top in the unusual circumstances of 1943-44.

As a narrative, the events of 1944 on the Australian home front are often dull. They brighten when read as the beginning of the story of the post-war years. One quality of their dullness is that they appear against the background of great events and major decisions being made in the world outside Australia.

2—AFTER THE ELECTIONS—COAL AND CENSORSHIP

After the elections, when the Labour Party Caucus voted to choose the members of the Ministry, they presented Curtin with only one newcomer, Mr Calwell, member for Melbourne, who had served one term in Parliament. They also presented him again with Ward, who had been off duty pending the outcome of the inquiry into his allegations regarding the Brisbane Line. Lawson, Minister for Transport, was not re-elected by the party.

Under the Labour Party practice a Prime Minister does not choose his own Ministers, but has the right to allocate portfolios. Curtin gave Ward the portfolio of Transport previously held by Lawson and tacked on to it another of the less esteemed posts, External Territories, previously held by Senator Fraser, and, in wartime conditions, involving few duties. Thus Ward found himself deprived of Labour and National Service and relegated to two portfolios previously held by more junior Ministers and, at that stage, of little significance.[7]

[7] The reappointment of Ward to Cabinet after his suspension may provide a minor point for discussion by students of Australian conventions on the formation of Cabinet. The reasons why Curtin suspended him had not been removed by the report of the Royal Commissioner, who found himself unable to answer three of the questions raised in his terms of reference because Ward, claiming privilege, would not appear before the Commission. The political fact, however, is that the Labour Party Caucus, in re-electing Ward to the Ministry, had taken on itself the responsibility of cancelling any disqualification he may have had and also, in effect, had directed Curtin to reinstate him. Whatever the convention might be thought to be, the reality is that Curtin could not have observed it except by making an issue of his own leadership.

Holloway, trusted and trustworthy, received Labour and National Service, and Fraser took his place as Minister for Health and Social Services. The newcomer, Calwell, the most junior of the team, was given Information, which had previously been held by the Postmaster-General, Ashley. Ashley, instead of Keane, was made Vice-President of the Executive Council. In the party election Dedman had risen three places in seniority. The slight rearrangement reflected no change in Curtin's approach to the tasks before his Government. The appointment of the new Minister, Calwell, to Information, appears to be of a piece with the deliberate lessening of the importance of that department in the twelve months preceding the election but, if so, Curtin had picked the wrong man to sit quietly by the sickbed of a dying and unwanted department.

The membership of War Cabinet and Production Executive remained unchanged.

Soon after the resumption of Parliament the future of the Advisory War Council became uncertain. After the change of Government in 1941, Menzies, Fadden, Spender and Hughes continued as members and McEwen joined it. From August 1942, Page was co-opted as an additional member from the Opposition.

The council had been meeting less and less frequently and from 8th July to 7th October 1943 no meeting was held. After the elections Curtin indicated that the council would be continued, as he himself would have expected it to be continued if the result of the elections had been otherwise. He regarded it as "integral to the machinery the Labour Party devised for the conduct of the war".[8] When it met on 7th October the Prime Minister announced that the arrangement for the co-opting of Sir Earle Page to attend meetings had been discontinued; the Treasurer, Mr Chifley, had also resigned as a member of the council. Henceforward the Government representatives would be Messrs Curtin, Forde, Evatt, Beasley and Makin.

In subsequent months the council met more frequently—about once each fortnight. In February 1944, however, Menzies and Hughes tendered their resignations after a U.A.P. meeting at which it was decided that "having regard to present political circumstances" its members should no longer participate, and that, in the absence of any all-party administration, the essential war and reconstruction effort could best be served by the party "resuming full freedom to express its views on the floor of Parliament".[9] Fadden also sent a letter in which he criticised the charter and method of procedure of the council as "falling short of making that body the most effective instrument for its avowed purpose". Nevertheless the Country Party was prepared to continue to provide members if Curtin thought there should be consultation between them.

These resignations prompted suggestions that the council might be

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 63, p. 11.
[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 76, p. 30.

terminated, but Curtin disagreed. In his view the council had something of value to contribute. Matters incidental to defence which could not be discussed in Parliament should be known to representative members of the Opposition. Curtin therefore took steps to fill the vacancies and Page formally became a member on 24th February 1944. Spender ignored the U.A.P. decision and continued to attend the council. On 19th April Hughes resumed membership of the council.

The Seventeenth Parliament was opened on 23rd September 1943. In the House of Representatives the Government had a majority of 49 to 24 and also retained the support of two Independents. In the Senate it could look forward to a majority of 22 to 14 when the new Senators took their seats after 1st July 1944. In the meantime the numbers had become equal.[1]

At a meeting on the day before the opening Menzies was restored to leadership of the U.A.P. Hughes did not seek re-election, an intention he had voiced before the elections; he did not feel capable, he said, of undertaking the tremendous amount of work that a leader of the party would be called on to do in the next few years. He became deputy-leader.[2]

Later it was revealed that the U.A.P. and Country Party had decided to end the fusion between them, and to work as separate entities in Parliament. Since the U.A.P. was the larger party, Menzies thus became the Leader of the Opposition. Fadden was re-elected as leader of the Country Party, and McEwen Deputy-Leader.

Although the new arrangement was made ostensibly because it was felt that each party would develop its fullest strength by not continuing in a joint Opposition, it was agreed that on important matters the practice of holding joint meetings would continue, and on such matters, in the House, leaders and deputy-leaders would act in close cooperation.

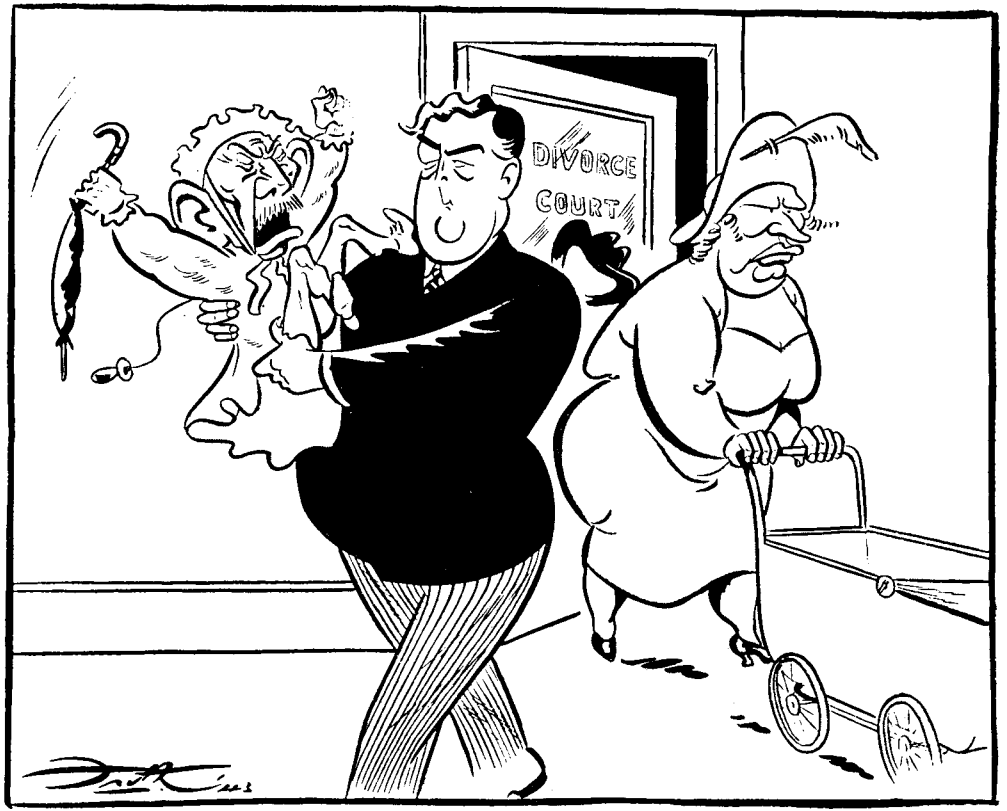
The Budget was brought down by Chifley on 29th September.[3] He recalled that a year earlier Australia was facing the threat of invasion and to meet the danger the fighting forces were mobilised to the utmost. The immediate danger had now passed but victory was yet to be won. It was essential that the national effort be reorganised "not only to take account of the definite limit to our physical resources but also to ensure such balance between our military and civil activities as will make a maximum contribution to the Allied war effort".

After pointing out that more than 50 per cent of the working population was engaged in the war effort—in the fighting forces, defence construction, manufacture of munitions, and producing essential supplies and services for both the Australian and Allied services—the Treasurer said that this diversion of manpower from civil requirements to war needs had

[1] After the death of Senator E. B. Johnston (Country Party, Western Australia) in September 1942, the casual vacancy had been filled by Senator C. G. Latham (Country Party). At the general elections in August 1943 Labour had won this casual vacancy as well as the three regular vacancies in Western Australiia. The new Senator for the casual vacancy was sworn in immediately while the three filling the regular vacancies waited until the following July to take their seats.

[2] After Hughes ceased to attend party meetings in April 1944, E. J. Harrison became deputy-leader.

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, pp. 155-249.



DECREE *NISI* BY CONSENT, WITH CUSTODY OF CHILD.

Frith in Bulletin *(Sydney) 29 Sep 1943*

After the 1943 election Menzies (U.A.P. leader) and Fadden (Country Party leader) are divorced but Menzies still has Hughes on his hands.

about reached its limits. The requirement for supplies was getting greater than Australia's capacity to produce them.

By 30th June 1943 the total cost of the war had reached £1,107,000,000, mainly provided by taxation (£363,000,000), loans (£474,000,000) and Treasury bills (£259,000,000). The Treasurer pointed to the danger of Treasury bill finance in building up new purchasing power in the hands of the public at the very time when the Government was acquiring for war purposes an increasing proportion of the resources normally devoted to civilian use. A rise in prices and inequitable distribution of goods was being prevented, however, by rationing and by price control. Other price stabilisation measures were being taken to control not only prices to the consumer but costs to the producer. All these restrictions must be maintained and there could be no relaxation on the home front because operations in the field were going well.

The external exchange position was satisfactory, export income having been maintained, imports reduced and no further loans raised overseas. Under the Lend-Lease plan a considerable volume of goods had been obtained from overseas and since March 1942 Australian reciprocal aid to the American forces had increased. In the coming year it was expected to reach £100,000,000, or one-sixth of the total war expenditure by Australia.

For 1943-44 war expenditure was estimated at £570,000,000—an increase of £8,250,000 over the previous year—and expenditure on purposes other than war was estimated at £144,500,000—an increase of £36,000,000, of which £30,000,000 would be accounted for by payments into the National Welfare Fund "established as an integral part of the Government's plans for the social security of the people". The increase in expenditure was almost covered by the estimated increase of £43,000,000 in taxation receipts as a result of increased taxes imposed in the previous March. The gap between expenditure and revenue was estimated at £403,000,000—the same figure as in 1942-43. Chifley hoped for £300,000,000 from public loans, with the continued use of Treasury bills to make good the deficiency of £103,000,000.

This guess about loan yields became the subject of Opposition doubts but their criticism was restrained.

Both Government and Opposition expressed some concern about the future. Chifley, reiterating that Treasury bill finance builds up a body of excess spending power which threatens inflation unless consumption and spending are vigilantly controlled, said: "It will be the accumulation of excess spending power at the end of the war which will make it necessary to prolong controls in the post-war period. The less the accumulation, the quicker controls can be removed and freedom restored." Menzies said: "You cannot set in movement all those great inflationary forces, which the Treasury knows so well, unless you are prepared also to put into operation the counteracting forces. . . . If, at the end of this war, we were merely to terminate rationing, prices control and all the other restrictions

the result . . . would be chaos. . . . On the other hand, if, after this war, we continue indefinitely, year after year, decade after decade, to have these controls then, equally inevitably, the whole of the economy, and the whole of the social and political life of Australia will become controlled." With some circumlocution he advanced the thesis of increasing the real wealth of Australia through private enterprise.

Chifley in his Budget speech also described some of the work being done by the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, established in December 1942, and by other agencies in planning the transition to a peacetime economy "and devising measures for obtaining a high level of employment and economic security in the post-war years". He also foreshadowed an immigration programme to help meet "the urgent need to increase the population".

On this point, too, Menzies pointed the contrast between socialism and private enterprise.

> I believe (he said) and my colleagues believe, and I hope that every civilised Australian believes, that our response to the great challenge of the post-war period will be revealed if, five or ten years after the war, it can be said that we really have been able to provide, in substance, full employment for the Australian people; that we have given, in substance, a real education to every person in Australia fit to receive it; that we have given to every young person in the community, whatever his social state, a chance to do anything for which his talents have fitted him; that we have made medicine and public health services available to every person in the community; and have attacked the causes of disease at their source. . . . Every member of this Parliament, irrespective of party, stands for these things; but the Opposition believes that these objectives will be more quickly obtained if we take all the steps necessary to increase the real wealth and resources of Australia. That is why the Opposition believes in individual initiative and in the reward of individual initiative.

The Budget debate of September and October 1943 contains many indications of the beginning of the post-war political issues between the parties. The whole session affords, too, a contrast between the plain certainty in his own mind on which Chifley, the post-war Labour leader, rested, and the way in which the Opposition leader, Menzies, was still thinking his way towards a policy for the future, with a prospective and not a retrospective view.

It became apparent that the completeness of the Government's victory at the polls had had its effect on the thinking of the Labour movement as well as Labour Ministers. Some members of the party might remember the circumstances of the elections and the appeal to the country to give the Government a clear majority for the waging of war, but as time passed the votes were interpreted more often as an endorsement of the party platform, and, remembering a decade without power, they found the present a time of opportunity.

Some of the Government's immediate political difficulties arose from the same outlook in the industrial section of Labour. Manpower was at a premium. Some sections of the trade union leadership clearly thought

that a Labour Government should use its commanding position to give the workers more of what they sought. The militants became more militant; the irresponsibles more reckless.

The Government pressed ahead with plans for a comprehensive health scheme, a long-standing objective of Labour's social policy; they returned more vigorously to the acquisition of additional powers by the Commonwealth. More and more emphasis was given to the need to plan now for the time when hostilities would cease; and, to some extent, this developing interest in the post-war period even obscured the Government's views on the continuing demands of the war. Some people who had not espoused Labour's policy began to take alarm at what appeared to be moves towards "nationalisation" and "socialisation".

The Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party in December 1943 carried a resolution calling on the Government "to nationalise essential industries as an indispensable part of the mobilisation of national resources for the defence of the Commonwealth"; another resolution in favour of the nationalisation of all transport industries at an early date; and a third resolution to the effect that the party should start immediately "a nation-wide campaign for socialism".

This third resolution and another somewhat vague one referring to a "plan for socialisation" do not appear to have been followed up energetically by the Federal Executive of the party. In practice, however, they did not need plans or propaganda. In wartime administration state control of production, distribution and exchange was the order of the day and in preparing for post-war reconstruction Labour thought naturally of a planned economy.

The election defeat had its effect on the Opposition. They had to see the war out and their field for campaigning against the Government was narrowed by the fact that the war was still being waged and sacrifices still demanded. They were further "out" after October 1943 than they had been in October 1941, and surely none of them could have nursed illusions of an early return to office.

Furthermore, the leaders, the organisation and the more active supporters of the United Australia Party were still handicapped by being the progeny of a political expedient. Fortunate is the political party that can boast of its nativity or invent an honourable ancestry. From 1934 to the death of Lyons in April 1939 the chief reasons for the existence of the U.A.P. were to be found in political measures taken to overcome the great depression. From 1939 to 1941 they had little opportunity to think of much besides war. The necessary rediscovery of their political tradition, the necessary re-examination of their political faith, and the necessary re-statement of their political platform for present and prospective conditions in Australia had never been made. The party had been due for overhaul in 1938. By 1943 it was rattling in every joint. Yet from the 1943 elections onwards it became increasingly apparent that a victorious Labour Party was winning the war the Labour Party way.

In wartime matters it was sometimes disregarding principles which the Menzies Government had thought important. In post-war planning it preferred the socialist method. In constitutional questions it tended towards greater Federal powers and unification. In international affairs it seemed to value the British link less than Menzies had done and saw more merit in governments of the Left than the U.A.P. could see, while it alarmed the extreme Right by its exaltation of an untried "internationalism" at the expense of a trusted "British Empire".

A volume which is part of a history of Australia during the war of 1939-45 is not the place to pursue further the political history of either the Labour Party or the two non-Labour parties. It needs to be kept in mind, however, that during 1944 and 1945 are to be found the beginnings of the post-war political events that culminated in the elections of 1949. The U.A.P. post-mortems of the 1943 elections were the precursors of various attempts to reshape the party. The wartime Opposition, though restrained to some extent by the demands of war and by the respect which Menzies had for Curtin and for the wartime duty he was trying to perform in the face of considerable political difficulties, was re-learning the nature of the political contest in those years. A successful Labour Party was applying its old policies. A weakened Opposition, its least considerable people the more garrulous and its leader musing on events, was not immediately active but here and there the discontented in its ranks were beginning to preach that it must be born again if it were to gain a hope of political life.

Two problems now engaged much of the time of the Government—coal and censorship.[7]

During 1943 the numbers of disputes on the coalfields rose, and the amount of coal won declined, until in October, the election now being out of the way, the Prime Minister announced bluntly to the nation that measures must be introduced to conserve coal because current stocks were inadequate to meet an emergency.[8] Out of a possible output of 12,748,000 tons, 2,502,000 had been lost, and, of this, the loss of 2,075,000 tons had been caused by absenteeism and strikes.

The union officials had continued their cooperation with the Government in efforts to persuade miners to increase production by reducing absenteeism and eliminating strikes. But the country was presented with the spectacle, on the one hand, of unions which were unable to control their members, and, on the other, of a Government which announced stern disciplinary measures but failed to impose them.

The Prime Minister's October announcement had been preceded by conferences. One of 5th October 1943 was attended by Curtin, Beasley, Holloway and Ward for the Government, by Mighell[9] and Orr[1] for the

[7] For earlier discussion of coal, see Chapter 4, Section 3, of the present volume.
[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 65, p. 16.
[9] Sir Norman Mighell, CMG. Chairman, Repatriation Commission 1935-41; Commonwealth Coal Commissioner 1941-46. B. Mackay, Qld, 12 Jun 1894. Died 13 Apr 1955.
[1] William Orr, a former General Secretary of the Miners' Federation.

Coal Commission, and by miners' representatives from the northern, southern and western fields in New South Wales, as well as members of the craft unions. At this conference Curtin agreed that miners should have a break of nine days in the forthcoming Christmas-New Year period because, he said, "I am encouraged by the miners' representatives that in the ensuing three months there will be a maintenance of production at such a level as will ensure the Government's being able to meet both its war and civil commitments."[2] Otherwise rationing would be unavoidable. But losses for the week ended on the 8th were 30,000 tons of coal; for the week ended on the 15th 20,000; and on the 17th two mines alone had lost 14,000 tons in strikes lasting for three and two weeks.

The matter was pressed in Parliament. The Prime Minister urged "understanding" of the miners' problem, on the one hand, and realisation by the miners, on the other, that they were "not the mere slaves of industry which at times they had reason to believe they were"; and he spoke of the importance of their labour "to the salvation of the country". Curtin stated his own difficulty:

> Some of the disputes are, in my opinion, without justification; some of the actions practised by the employers are, in my opinion, absolutely without justification. I am, however, not an arbitration court judge; I can only hold a view. I have not the responsibility to impose punishment, and, in any event, I am faced with the fact that it is only by miners going down into the mine that coal can be produced. Putting them in gaol will not produce coal. There is no alternative source of labour competent to win coal.[3]

Discipline by fining had not got far. Fines had not been collected during the Attorney-General's absence abroad, and Evatt put the blame on the State magistrates, who replied that they needed direct instructions before proceeding. Evatt announced that proceedings would be taken forthwith. But again the Government stayed its hand.

The conference on the 5th had received proposals from the Miners' Federation under two headings: industrial and political. Under the first they asked for more skips, the release of mine workers from the army and industry, introduction of horsewheeling in Queensland, introduction of some forms of underground transport, development of small black-coal mines in Victoria, development of Blair Athol in Queensland, better ventilation and reduction of dust, employment of inspectors to check use of coal, pit committees to be compulsory, other methods of income tax collection, electric or power boring machinery, and Christmas holidays.

The Government had various answers: that the miners' own practices neutralised the proposed action, that some proposals were hopelessly uneconomic, that some matters were outside the domain of the Federation; this or that was a matter of Government policy, or, as in the case of holidays, that the matter had already been decided.

Under the second group of headings the Federation proposed nationalisation, appointment of a Federal Minister for Mines, improvement and

[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 65, p. 9.
[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, p. 216.

broadening of the Coal Commission, alteration in the set-up of the Central Reference Board and removal of its chairman, Judge Drake-Brockman,[4] and appointment of a full-time chairman in Queensland. It proposed that the Government should leave prosecutions and union discipline alone, amend wage-pegging regulations, take over State pensions schemes, improve the position of compensation, give assurances that there would be no depression, and build special homes for medical treatment. The Prime Minister should visit the mines.

To most of these requests the reply was that the question was one of Government policy—nationalisation included. On nationalisation, the Government argued that "under the *National Security Act* the Government has full power to get from the owners what coal it requires and to put it to what uses it requires. To pay a large sum in compensation to the owners for their mines to achieve the same result would merely add to the already colossal war budget."[5] On prosecutions, Curtin said: "This proposal suggests that the federation's discipline is iron-clad. The fact is, as I have already told the federation's officers, that the authority of the union as a union is involved and its authority has not been maintained."

It was on this point of union discipline that all schemes broke down. The Coal Commission had reported on coal losses to Curtin and to the Miners' Federation and the Australasian Council of Trade Unions. "My readiness to agree to holidays," Curtin said, "was based on encouragement given to me [that] production would rise. This looks now to be a vain hope."[6] Three days later Lowden, the Southern District president of the Miners' Federation, sent Curtin a statement of his views. This took the form of an exhortation to miners:

> The stoppages, many of which should, and could, have been avoided, are divisible into two classes—stubbornness on the part of managements, and stubbornness on the part of members of the Miners' Federation. Be that as it may, it is our duty as workers in an industry that is most essential, that we should continue to work as regularly as we possibly can. . . . No one can say that we have done the right thing to our members of the forces, but it is not too late to determine that we will, as our worthy Prime Minister suggests, produce the necessary output to guarantee our fellow-members of the forces the necessary break, and an assurance that so far as their equipment is concerned, there shall be no lack of same so far as the mining community is concerned.[7]

The conference was to be resumed, but before this happened, Curtin presented in Parliament a plain statement of the parlous condition of the country's coal supplies, and the restrictions on consumption which must be imposed. A saving of 31,000 tons a week was the target: 12,500 from the railways, 12,500 from industry, 1,000 from external lighting, and 5,000 from gas and electricity.[8] A week later the Coal Commission announced that every industrial user would be expected to reduce his con-

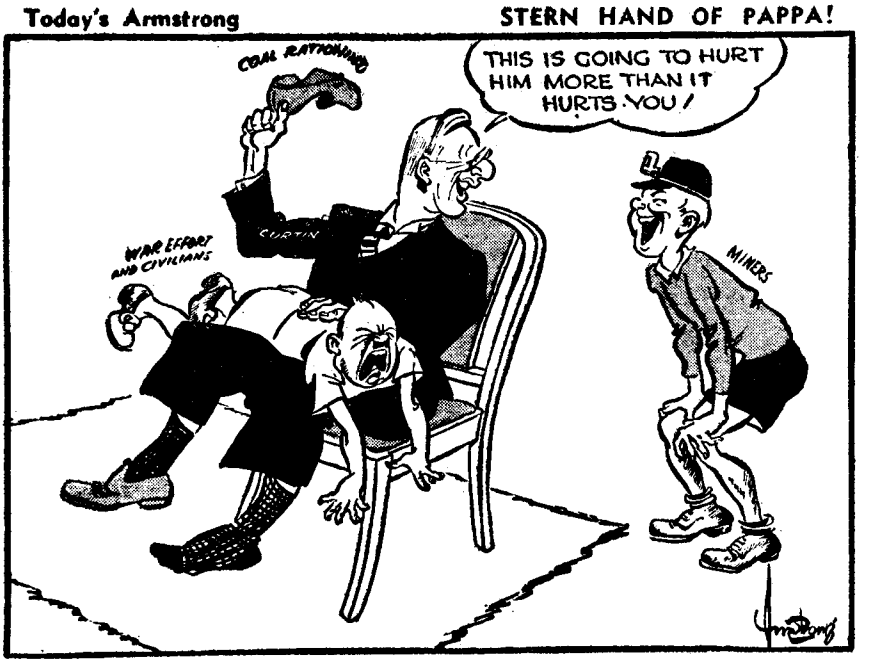
[4] Maj-Gen Hon E. A. Drake-Brockman, CB, CMG, DSO, VD. GOC 3 Div 1937-42. Judge, Commonwealth Arbitration Court 1927-47, Chief Judge 1947-49. Of Perth; b. Busselton, WA, 21 Feb 1884. Died 1 Jun 1949.

[5] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 65, p. 13.

[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 65, p. 14.

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 65, p. 15.

[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, p. 559, 14 Oct 1943.





Armstrong in Argus *(Melbourne) 18 Oct 1943 and 24 Aug 1945*

These cartoons reflect the popular opinion that the coal miners had successfully defied authority. In the first (1943) Curtin punishes the community instead of the miners. In the second, two years later, Chifley, the Prime Minister, as well as the community, is prostrate under the feet of the miners.

sumption by 12½ per cent; domestic users would be put "on their honour" to reduce consumption by 20 per cent. The Government proposed to increase production by prosecuting mineworkers who stayed away from work and mine managements responsible for breaches of regulations; by mechanising mines; by providing additional labour; by working a second shift in mines on the South Maitland field; by reconsidering holidays for the Christmas-New Year period; by resuming the conference with the miners; by appointing a sub-committee of Cabinet to review the machinery of the coal code; and by appointing Rowland James, the Member for Hunter (N.S.W.) as a liaison officer between the unions and the Prime Minister. But these decisions disappointed Wells, the Miners' President. Only two, he said, related to practical mining questions: further mechanisation and the second shift. And about the second shift he announced: "The federation has many times indicated very great aversion to working a second shift, not only in principle, but for practical mining reasons."[9]

The Queensland railways had been exempted from the cuts because of their role in the war; but there were vigorous protests from other States, in particular New South Wales, where there was a heavy demand on the railway system. Nevertheless, by the middle of November, twenty-two more trains had been cut out of week-end time-tables in New South Wales. One result of the reduction in lighting was agitation for the removal of boards erected in front of windows for air raid precaution purposes.

Among the miners' requests had been the removal of Judge Drake-Brockman as chairman of the Central Coal Reference Board. The Prime Minister withdrew the Judge from the chairmanship in relation to mining disputes and announced that Mr Willis,[1] a former miners' president and Labour Minister in New South Wales, would take his place. In the outcome, at a meeting on 23rd November which followed a further conference on 8th November of Government, owners and miners, the Full Cabinet decided to establish a Central Reference Authority on the lines of the Central Reference Board to deal with Miners' Federation matters as distinguished from those of craft unions.[2] On 10th December the National Security (Coal Mining Industry Employment) Regulations were amended to constitute the Central Coal Authority.[3] This was to consist of two representatives of the employers, two of the Federation and a chairman "who shall be a person who holds the office of Judge of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court or Conciliation Commissioner". Local Reference Boards would be established and the Court was not to make an award inconsistent with an award of the Authority.[4]

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[9] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 Oct 1943.

[1] A. C. Willis. MLC NSW 1925-33; Commonwealth Conciliation Commissioner 1943-45. B Tonyrefail, Wales, 24 May 1876. Died 22 Apr 1954.

[2] Full Cabinet Agendum 563, 19 Nov, meeting 23 Nov.

[3] Statutory Rules, No. 295 of 1943. These inserted Part IA, "The Central Coal Authority".

[4] *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 263 of 15 Dec 1943, p. 2708, announced the appointment from 13th December of A. C. Willis, Conciliation Commissioner, as chairman, R. W. Davie and W. F. McNally as representatives for the employers, and H. C. Wells (General President) and G. W. S. Grant (General Secretary) for the Miners' Federation. Willis was appointed a Conciliation Commissioner from 13th December and thus became eligible for his appointment as chairman.

The year 1943 ended with an output of coal in New South Wales over 732,000 tons less than in 1942 although the number of men employed in the industry had risen by 400. It was estimated that 1,294,884 tons had been lost by strikes and 1,090,522 tons lost by absenteeism. Early in 1944, after a general strike of all coal-mines in the Southern District of New South Wales, the Government introduced the Coal Production (Wartime) Bill to appoint a single Commonwealth Coal Commissioner and to give him extraordinary powers over the industry and the persons employed in it.

The Commissioner was charged with the duty of "securing an increase in the production of coal" and for that purpose was given power to take control of mines, fix prices, terminate or modify existing contracts, compulsorily acquire coal, commandeer plant and equipment, to direct labour from the manager down to the humblest employee and do many other acts of a similar kind. Perhaps his most unusual power was that, in a controlled mine, if any person wilfully disobeyed or disregarded orders or failed to do his work, the Commissioner or his authorised agent could make deductions from his pay—virtually impose a fine on him without laying a charge or bringing him to trial. He could also banish a person from employment in the coal-mining industry.[5] One positive element in the Act was that if the Commissioner required a mine owner to modify plant and equipment or to acquire new plant and equipment he would make the necessary financial advances to him for the work to be done.

The Act also provided that Control and Local Industrial Authorities were to be appointed by the Minister and would become officers of the Commissioner. "Broadly speaking," said Curtin, "the central industrial authority will deal with all matters which affect the industry generally, whilst local industrial authorities will deal with all problems and disputes arising within the limits of the locality to which they are appointed."[6] Curtin justified the need for the Bill as follows:

> Whatever may be the real reason for past occurrences one thing is obvious, and that is that in a democracy no group of workers, just as no group of employers, can be permitted to arrogate to themselves the right to dictate to the Parliament, and so to the Government, as to the means of conducting the defence of the Commonwealth and of carrying on to their maximum capacity all those services and industries that are incidental to that purpose. Were it otherwise, there would be an abdication of the functions of government. For that reason, the Government decided to bring down this bill so that the Parliament should exercise its prerogative of expressing the will of the people and directing the measures which shall be taken to ensure that coal shall be produced and distributed for all purposes essential to the conduct of the war.[7]

Previously on 6th March, when work on all mines in the southern district of New South Wales ceased, the Prime Minister had announced: "The men have defied not only the Government but the leadership of their own union and have apparently made their minds up that coal-miners are able to work when they like, how they like. . . . I have only to say

[5] *Coal Production (Wartime) Act*; No. 1 of 1944 commenced on 8th March.
[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 444.
[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 443, 23 Feb 1944.

that the law in relation to this matter is going to take its course inexorably. No group of men can usurp the functions of the Government of Australia."[8]

It might be pointed out, however, that so far as industrial regulation was concerned, the Act had prevented the miners from defying the law by altering the law to mean that, in accordance with the request of the miners, they should not come under the same tribunals or be subject to the same law as all other Australian workers but should have an industrial system of their own.

On 9th March, Mighell, who had been chairman of the Commonwealth Coal Commission since its inception, was appointed sole Commissioner under the new Act. He organised the Commission's activities in sections for distribution, production, administrative, industrial, full economy and financial. In the industrial sphere, Mr Willis, successor to Judge Drake-Brockman, was appointed as the Central Industrial Authority.

Under Mighell the Coal Commission undoubtedly brought greater orderliness and dispatch into the production and distribution of coal and its extension of open-cut mining and improvement of open-cut techniques gave valuable additions to coal supplies. But it brought no solution to the problems of discipline and no improvement in the recurrent industrial stoppages. The number of days worked in 1944 was less than in 1943 and the output of coal in New South Wales declined by another 430,000 tons. The year 1945 was worse still and in the last year of war the tonnage lost by strikes had risen to 2,466,000 tons and by absenteeism to 1,569,000.

Acceding to the miners' requests, whether in respect of the machinery for handling industrial disputes or in respect of the control over ownership and improvements in conditions in the mines, did not bring increased production of coal. What Curtin said to Parliament in March 1944 was equally true a year later:

> The miners not only refuse to respect the wishes and policy of the Government, but they also refuse to respect and heed the advice of their own leaders. . . . Circumstances associated with stoppages . . . cause me the gravest anxiety. They do not arise out of the normal disputes that unions have with employers over claims for improved conditions, or for higher pay. Frankly, I do not know the basic cause which produces this state of mind.[9]

The Government fluttered between a strong uncompromising attitude, and one of appeasement. The Attorney-General announced on 21st October that fines not collected would be paid by garnisheeing wages, and such garnishees would be retrospective. A week later Curtin announced that, on the contrary, the garnishees would not be retrospective. Then Evatt announced that, as a result of the conference's assurances that production would improve, the Government had granted an amnesty in respect of both uncollected fines and of all previous stoppages or breaches of the regulations up to the end of the previous week. Garnishees would be adopted from 1st November.

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[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 78, p. 1.
[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 1065; Curtin, on 8 Mar 1944.

But the Federation itself united with its members against this method. If the Government fines the men, said Wells, that is the Government's business; if it tries to collect the garnishees that is our business. Garnishees provided another cause for strikes; the Southern District Federation announced that it would support strikes against garnishees. And when the Federation suggested that it pay the garnishees, and collect from the miners by fortnightly deductions, miners struck on that account also: the Federation was, they contended, making itself the collecting agent for the Government.

The unresolved problem was how to extract obedience from the miners, and that in itself was, of course, part of the greater, and most important, problem, how to increase the production of coal. For to the country at large, and for the war effort, the vital matter remained: "The plain fact is that unless more coal is in production it will be impossible to maintain the tempo of the war."[1] Solutions ranged from the rigorous disciplinary measures advocated by sections of the press, to the acceptance of every demand made by the miners. The Government made elaborate efforts to avoid antagonising miners, even to the point of employing censorship of reports of unrest and strikes in progress on the fields.[2] Discipline by the Federation itself had been looked for, but failed; discipline by fines had only produced strikes and an inability to collect the imposts; use of other labour was urged, but there remained Curtin's assessment of the position: "I know that only the coal-miners, men accustomed to the mining of coal, can give to the country the coal it needs."[3]

The result was that the Government henceforward struggled to make the best of what it could get; and solved the problem of insufficient supplies by restricting consumption. In the end it was the general public who paid for the lack.

The result, if only faintly at first, was a lessening of sympathy with the miners themselves. Before the year was out they would cease to have the sympathy of other unionists; and in the cleavage that had appeared between the Miners' Federation and the Labour Government sympathy lay more with the Government than with the miners. The Federation itself, in the figure of its General President at least, continued to exhort the miners to do better by the Government.[4]

In January 1945, when stoppages and disputes were worse than ever, the Government appointed a Board of Inquiry under the National Security (Inquiries) Regulations to inquire into and report on a wide range of matters relating to the coal industry, including the extent and causes of

[1] Curtin at conference, 6 Oct 1944.

[2] The following note, dated 29th February 1944, on a departmental file, appears to express the understanding that the staff of Publicity Censorship had of what was expected of them: "Censorship's policy on the broadcasting of statements on the coal situation is that broadcasting cannot be used at the present time to inflame or provoke what is already a very difficult and delicate situation on the coalfields. These are very critical days in the coal-mining industry and it is in the national interest that nothing provocative or inflammatory can be allowed. This policy is being applied impartially to statements by spokesmen for both miners and owners and by spokesmen for all political parties. . . . A good deal of provocative matter has also been kept out of the press."

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 78, p. 4, 8 Mar 1944.

[4] See *Common Cause*, "Outlook for 1944", 5 Feb 1944.

avoidable absenteeism, the causes of stoppages, the defects (if any) in the present system of industrial conciliation and arbitration in the coal-mining industry and the remedy for such defects, and various aspects of the improvement of the health and safety and provision of amenities and services for the miners. Its original members were Mr Justice Davidson[5] of the Supreme Court of New South Wales as chairman with a representative of the colliery proprietors and a representative of the employees. It commenced work immediately. Illness brought the loss of the employees' representative and when the Miners' Federation declined to replace him, the Government decided in March 1946 to appoint Mr Justice Davidson as sole commissioner in place of the board of inquiry and later that month the report was completed and presented in his single name. It has become a basic document, albeit the centre of some political controversy, in the study of the Australian coal industry. For present purposes it will be sufficient to quote some of the conclusions of the commissioner that have more direct relevance to wartime experience. He found that discipline was almost non-existent among members of the Miners' Federation. This was mainly due to weak and divided leadership, political antagonism between Communists and non-Communists, political intrigue directed towards the weakening and ultimate abolition of the compulsory arbitration system, the success achieved by nearly all strikes in gaining some concessions, inability or reluctance of the Government to enforce the law against large numbers of individual strikers or absentees, appeasement on the part of the Government in yielding to improper demands under threats of disruption of the industry, and vigorous opposition by the Federation to the dismissal of an employee by the management of the mines for any reason whatever. He held the view that most of the stoppages during the war were not based on a genuine grievance while many had not been due to disputes with the owners or management. An absurd position had been reached in which numerous minor disputes were carried to Ministers and became major political issues—the subject of innumerable conferences. Prosecutions might have had more force if pursued inexorably.[6]

The truth about the coal industry and the lives of those who work in it cannot be studied in a page or in a chapter of a war history. They spread far beyond those narrow limits. Indeed it is in the very nature of this subject that it refused to be changed by war as much as other phases of the national life were changed. When one has this uncertainty about the hidden and less definite parts of the problem one refrains from any judgment that the Curtin Government failed in its handling of the situation, and more charitably records that coal was not one of its successes. The chief admiration is reserved for Mighell and others of his kind who, hampered on one hand by the fits and starts of the political chiefs, and exasperated on the other with the almost meaningless conduct of the miners, still kept coal production as high as they did.

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[5] Hon Sir Colin Davidson. Justice, Supreme Court of NSW 1927-48; Chairman, Royal Commissions on Coal Industry 1929-30 and 1945-46. B. Mudgee, NSW, 18 Nov 1878. Died 8 Jul 1954.

[6] Parliamentary Papers 1945-46, No. 51, p. 47.

The story of the political difficulties of the Government over censorship during 1943 and 1944 cannot be understood without looking first at the Department of Information. The new Minister, Calwell, took over a department that was marked for the axe. As a private member he had himself been one of its most frequent critics in Parliament. It is difficult to understand what was in Curtin's mind when he allotted this portfolio to his most junior Minister but the events of the preceding eight months certainly do not support any suggestion that Calwell was put there to rebuild it or to be unduly active, even although he was the first Minister who had Information as his sole concern.[8]

The troubles of the Department of Information in the first two years of war have been recounted elsewhere.[9]

Between December 1941 and June 1942 the department had lost most of its sections in a reorganisation suggested by Ashley for promoting greater efficiency and achieving "the main purpose for which the department was established". It acquired a Canberra secretariat, but the short-wave news service went to the Australian Broadcasting Commission; Publicity Censorship, which had transferred its headquarters from Melbourne to Canberra, went to Defence because of its special relationship to national security and the fighting services; the advertising division went to Treasury. The post of Director-General of Information lapsed. The last occupant (whose title had been Director) resigned in January 1942 and the chief officer of the department was thereafter known as Secretary.

A Cabinet sub-committee, appointed at the end of April 1942,[1] reported very adversely on 22nd May.[2] It recommended that the department should be abolished; the work of its press section, now drastically reduced, could be carried out by the Publicity Branch of the Prime Minister's Department; the photographic section could be carried on by the Department of the Army; and the Australian Broadcasting Commission should be asked to undertake all broadcasting services. The Cabinet, however, rejected these drastic proposals. The Full Cabinet decided that the Treasurer and the Minister for Information should confer about the Estimates for the department in the forthcoming year and reach an agreement on a reduced scale of functions and expenditure. The department would run as amended for three months and its future would then be considered again. In the 1942-43 Budget the department suffered a cut of nearly a third in its expenditure.[3]

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[8] In the Menzies Ministry to 29th August 1941 Senator Foll as Minister for the Interior was also Minister for Information; he continued to hold both portfolios in the brief Fadden Ministry to 7th October 1941. Curtin gave Information to Ashley as additional to his main duties as Postmaster-General; Calwell was Minister for Information—a single portfolio—from 21st September 1943.

[9] See *The Government and the People 1939-1941*, pp. 201-3, 238-42, 383-4.

[1] Initially the Prime Minister, Treasurer and Minister for Information. Stress of work caused Curtin and Chifley to be replaced by Scullin and Lazzarini, Scullin acting as Chairman. The appointment of the committee was recorded as 28th April.

[2] Ashley dissented from the report and did not sign it.

[3] It is interesting to read, in these circumstances, the department's own submission to the Cabinet sub-committee in May representing itself as "the publicity instrument of the War Cabinet". The submission continued:

"The department considers as its functions the use of every avenue of publicity, direct and indirect, to ensure that as far as possible the point of view of the Government is impressed

One of the disputes over function that is specially relevant to troubles which followed later arose from the appointment by the Army of its own official war correspondents and photographers in the Middle East and the circulation of their material direct to the Australian press and to overseas countries. The original war correspondents and photographers had been sent by the Department of Information, and in January 1942 it complained of this "incursion" into its activities, and sought to gain firstly a direction on its exclusive right to release information and secondly a direction to the Army to make no further appointments. Consideration of its complaint was postponed indefinitely and in June 1942 it had to contend with a new suggestion that its own photographic section should either take over or be taken over by the Army's photographic unit of the Military History Section, now returned from the Middle East. After a conference of representatives of both departments and exchanges between Ministers the matter dragged on and the two organisations continued to operate separately.[4]

A scheme for the transfiguration of Information came in September when a curiously-composed body styled the Committee of National Morale presented an interim report to the Government. This report alleged that the department's success was limited because it had never enjoyed high prestige; separate publicity agencies existed in other departments; it had no effective control of advertising, publicity and research employed by other departments; authority was split between Publicity Censorship and the Department of Information; the department had no research agency "free of commercial interests" to undertake surveys of morale and public reactions to Government decisions and departmental publicity, and it had found few methods of influencing the public apart from commercial advertising which was "often completely unsuited to the needs of Government propaganda".[5] The committee urged that the Prime Minister should hold the portfolio of Information, that the department should resume the function of Publicity Censorship and should also supervise all government publicity campaigns. A civil servant of high standing should be appointed

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not only on the public, but on all quarters that can influence war policy either in Australia or abroad. As the Government has no newspapers or other publicity media of its own the department is charged with the duty of exploiting as far as possible existing media as the shortest cut to the mass of the people."

The sub-committee acknowledged the considerable amount of work entailed in preparing and distributing matter to provincial and country newspapers, but said that most of the matter used was ministerial statements which could be supplied by the Prime Minister's Department. As for a claim about the preparation of background information and exerting influence on leading and special articles, the sub-committee thought this was "remarkable for its exaggeration. It reflects more what the department would wish to do than what it has actually accomplished."

[4] War Cabinet Minute 2217, 30 Jun 1942, and War Cabinet Agendum 269/1942. The matter had wider implications involving the role of the Army's Directorate of Public Relations. The question of separate photographic units—one for Information and one for Army—was still unsettled when peace came. The Commander-in-Chief stuck firmly to the view that the Army's needs could only be served by its own photographers. A proposed agendum in January 1943 described the intervening events smoothly in the phrase "since that conference . . . Department of Information and Directorate of Public Relations have been able to come to a modus operandi distinctly to the advantage of both the Army and Information Departments".

For a discussion of the place of the Army Directorate of Public Relations and of the Army Military History Section, see G. Long, *The Final Campaigns* (1963), in the Army series of this history.

[5] Report of Committee, 8 Sep 1942. Its members under A. A. Conlon as chairman were J. Stone, K. L. Barry, R. M. Crawford, S. H. Deamer, A. K. Stout, H. I. Hogbin, W. E. H. Stanner, R. D. Wright and E. D. Roper. Official records do not support the claims that have been made in public that this committee played a significant role in this or any other matter.

Director-General "able to secure the wholehearted cooperation of the press"; he should have direct access to the War Cabinet and be assisted by committees (under an "Assistant Director-General—Social and Psychological") covering press and radio, foreign affairs, social and economic matters, and morale. The Director-General would direct surveys of public relations and would be assisted by a "staff of high-ranking persons unhampered by previous association with vested interests liable to be influenced by Government policies".

It is difficult to discover what standing this committee had. It is easy to realise that it had no effective influence. Curtin passed its report to Scullin for discussion with Ashley and Lazzarini but Scullin's illness prevented his taking part and the matter went to Ashley himself with a note which mentioned Calwell's and Cameron's criticisms of the department's expenditure during the debates on Supply.[6] Ashley could not see that the committee's recommendations would "add anything to the success of the department".[7]

Curtin's intention to discuss the matter with the Treasurer and Ashley (in effect the sub-committee which had considered the fate of the department in June 1942) was not fulfilled. It seemed appropriate to leave the matter until the discussions on the Estimates for 1943-44.[8] In the meantime the secretariat moved from the Hotel Canberra to buildings more customarily if less comfortably the abode of departments.[9]

By the time that Calwell took office as Minister for Information, in September 1943, the only significant further changes had been the opening of a News and Information Bureau in New York and the posting of an Information Officer to London. The Estimates for 1943-44, which would have been drafted before the Ministerial change, provided only £298,000—an increase of £49,000 on 1942-43. The Secretary to the Department was Mr R. E. Hawes.

One of Calwell's earliest acts, performed within three weeks of being sworn in, was to recommend that "in the interests of efficiency and economy" the Department of Information and the Publicity Censorship should be under one control, that the Chief Publicity Censor, Mr Bonney,[1] should be created Director of Information—the title was changed to Director-General a few weeks later—and that Bonney should arrange the amalgamation. Hawes became Chief Administrative Officer of the Department.

It would appear that this change had been in preparation before the election and was not originated by Calwell. The change was significant both because of the increased importance given to Publicity Censorship

[6] The Cabinet had subsequently directed that all departments should make provision from their own funds to finance the cost of campaigns conducted by the Department of Information. (Full Cabinet Minute, 26 Aug 1942.)

[7] Ashley to Curtin, 10 Dec 1942.

[8] Curtin to Ashley, 2 Feb 1943.

[9] On 5th April 1943.

[1] E. G. Bonney. Editor *Argus* (Melbourne) 1938-40; Chief Publicity Censor 1940-43; Director-General of Information 1943-48; Director, Aust News and Information Bureau, New York 1948-51. B. Sydney, 24 Nov 1885. Died 26 Feb 1959.

and because of the personality of the man chosen to be Director-General of Information as well as Chief Publicity Censor. Since early in the life of the first Curtin Government Bonney had come increasingly into closer touch with senior Ministers over the management of what should be kept out of Australian newspapers and had shown himself an initiator rather than a humble servant in the task of using publicity censorship to protect the reputation of the Government. He had become accustomed to make his suggestions, complaints and criticisms direct to Curtin, who, as Minister for Defence, was the Minister responsible for Publicity Censorship from 1st March 1942 until Calwell's appointment in September 1943. Bonney had obtained from Curtin in July 1943 a new Press and Broadcasting Censorship Order under Regulation 16 of the National Security Regulations strengthening the hand of the Publicity Censor and, in February 1943, he obtained Curtin's endorsement of his authority to initiate prosecutions.[2] He had also been able to establish his superior authority over Postal and Telegraph Censorship in respect of censorship of any press messages, either incoming or outgoing, transmitted by post or telegraph. Certainly the unusual powers of the Publicity Censorship were not created or enlarged by Calwell but were inherited by him from Curtin's administration of censorship. The subsequent controversies arose in part over the interpretation of those powers but largely over the manner in which they were applied.

Bonney's unusual position in close association with Ministers had also grown up before Calwell came on the scene and it was a Cabinet decision in creating him Director-General of Information that visibly removed the Publicity Censor from what might have been thought to be an office of independence and detachment concerned primarily with security to an office which was clearly one for the advancement of Government policy. Few acts of the Curtin Government so clearly demonstrate its departure from previously held canons on censorship than the appointment of the Chief Publicity Censor to be head of the Department of Information while continuing to carry out his responsibilities as censor. Bonney had a reputation among his admirers—and all those who worked close to him appear to have been devoted to him—for courage, loyalty to his staff and to his masters, and a high sense of public duty. He was a journalist by training and consequently he did not venerate newspaper proprietors and he had no doubt about the rightness of his own opinion on what ought to go into a newspaper and what ought to be kept out of it.

The press commented unfavourably on the appointment. "During his tenure of the post of Chief Censor, censorship . . . has earned itself an unenviable reputation of undue severity, not so much in the matter of military security, but in damping down criticism and unpalatable news,

[2] Although there is some incompleteness in the records available, the situation appears to have been that a new Press and Broadcasting Censorship Order was gazetted on 18th January 1943, repealing the orders that had been gazetted in October 1939 and March 1940, but this order lapsed through not having been tabled in Parliament within the required period. Consequently a new order, containing further amendments, was made on 31st July 1943 and provided the legal foundation for all actions taken by Bonney after Calwell became Minister.

and, on occasion, of restricting matter politically opposed to the Government."[3] The Australian Newspaper Proprietors' Association, meeting early in November, declared that censorship was becoming "political" and going beyond the original purpose of "security".

The new Minister and the former Chief Publicity Censor, now Director-General of Information, entered full of fight into a controversy on publicity censorship which at that stage needed cool hands on the brow rather than a throttling grip on the throat. Calwell, as a private member, and Bonney as a servant of the Government, had already identified themselves as men having strong views on the delinquencies of the Australian newspapers. They had now been brought together as a team to deal with them.

The problem already existed. In the early days of the war, when the Department of Information was in a formative stage, and when policy on censorship was being laid down for the first time, there had been those who had stressed the need for a "positive" rather than a "negative" approach to publicity. Sir Keith Murdoch, as Director-General of Information, had the idea that his department should be a "department of expression", telling as much as possible to the people, and should try to avoid becoming a "department of suppression".[4] The original Censorship Rules had explicitly limited the field of censorship. In general, publicity censorship had two major purposes. One was to prevent the publication of information which would be helpful to the enemy or a handicap to our own forces. The other was to prevent the publication of matter that, by causing distrust or confusion among our own people, would lessen our own capacity to wage war or give opportunities to the enemy propagandist to work upon the weakness of our people. Throughout the war there was little argument with the newspapers about the first aim so long as it was served by the censoring of such facts as troop and shipping movements, weather reports, and the plans of the armed services. There was some argument about the arrangements made for the releasing of news about the forces when censorship was not needed and occasionally it was disputed whether or not an item which had been suppressed would really have helped the enemy if it had been published, but basically any argument on censorship for the sake of security had been about the competence with which it was done and not about the need for doing it.

The major arguments on publicity censorship concerned matters other than security. The censor acquired the function of virtually deciding what it was good for the newspaper readers to know. He became the protector of what was called "public morale". The public must not be alarmed or incited. It had to be protected from bad news and from anything that might shake confidence. Necessarily the censor became a censor not only of reports about events but of reports of opinions expressed. In the case of coal-mining we have seen that the censor had to take care that nothing

[3] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 Oct 1943.

[4] See *The Government and the People 1939-1941*. The establishment of censorship of various kinds and the policy of censorship are dealt with briefly at pages 179-185.

appeared that might irritate the miners. The censor became the nursemaid of the reader and the conscience of the editor.

It would appear that the growing importance of this phase of censorship was due in part to the lack of success of the Department of Information in its positive role. The causes of that lack of success cannot be explored convincingly here but it is impossible to find acceptable evidence that by the end of 1943 the Department of Information was having a strong constructive influence in improving what was called the "morale" of the Australian people. Almost every action it took or pronouncement it made was a confession of its worry and uncertainty on this account. It therefore tended to turn to measures to stop the "morale" from being damaged by others. Hence the influence and the instrumentality which made it a "department of suppression" came to the top. It showed clear signs of being more frightened of the harm that might be done by printing information than hopeful of the good that might be accomplished by publication.

Before a harsh judgment is made, however, some attention needs to be paid to the situation with which the Department of Information had to contend. A diligent reading of files of Australian newspapers during the war and a close study of particular instances in which complaints were made either by newspapers or against them does not awaken admiration of the Australian press. The phrase "in the public interest" is used by them often to justify the publication of items of scandal. It is seldom if ever applied to the withholding of publication. They exhorted all other Australians to serve their nation in wartime by accepting the directions of constituted authority but frequently denied that constituted authority could tell them what it was proper or expedient to do. It was wrong for a coal-miner to make his personal interpretation of the requirements of patriotism but wholly proper for the newspaper editor to do so. If their sense of patriotism required them to tell their readers that a Minister was a bungling fool they should use their newspaper to do so. If the patriotism of the Minister required him to tell their readers the reasons for his actions, they reserved to themselves the right to decide for themselves whether it was proper for him to use their newspaper to do so. Some of the claims of the press to have freedom, rights and privileges that go beyond those of all other citizens might be more easily recognised if it could be seen that they were only used to serve a public and not a private good. At a distance of some years the files of newspapers during 1943 provide much evidence of a low level of editorial responsibility and scant regard for national interests in time of war.

Although the behaviour of the press was not admirable in wartime and although newspapers often contained items which could be proved to be incorrect or distorted and which, if believed, would mislead readers or bring dismay or distrust to them, those facts only set the problem and do not dispose of it. If a person in authority has reached an opinion that an item of news is untrue or unfair or against the public interest is

that sufficient ground for the same authority to rule that it must not be published? Where can be found the certainty that the opinion of authority that an item is untrue or against public interest can be distinguished from an opinion that the item is merely disadvantageous to those in authority?

From the documents available it would appear that the broadening of the interpretation of "morale" and the extension of censorship to political items came after the change to the Labour Government and as the result of Ministerial intervention.[5] With the outbreak of war with Japan, governmental concern mounted.

On 29th December 1941 the instruction on censorship of references to industrial disputes was amended to read: "Press references to strikes or threatened strikes anywhere in Australia should be restricted to statements issued for publication under the name of an official representative of either party or by a Minister. Anonymous partisan statements or reports most undesirable. No broadcast reference to any individual dispute without prior consultation with censorship." Previously the practice had been to issue instructions, if required, about a particular dispute and it had been stricter in the case of wireless broadcasts than in newspaper publication because a broadcast might be picked up by a neutral or enemy ship and disclose matters of value to the enemy. On 25th January 1942 a further instruction was given that all material relating to industrial disputes should be submitted to censorship. The reason was that "negotiations" were at a delicate stage and "nothing imperilling industrial peace is allowable". In a note to the Prime Minister informing him of the decision, Bonney stated that the instruction was issued at the instance of the Ministers for Labour (Ward) and Information (Ashley).[6] One assumes that Curtin may have asked for this information. Two days later the instruction was withdrawn apparently as the result of representations made to Curtin at a press conference in Canberra.[7] In War Cabinet on 24th January Evatt, also quoting the Premier of New South Wales, McKell, in support of his view, drew attention to certain newspaper articles critical of the Prime Minister and Minister for the Army and expressed the view that they were "seriously prejudicial to national morale". He said he had been in touch with Bonney who had issued a warning to the papers. War Cabinet decided that "the position should be kept under review and that action should be taken against offending newspapers as may be necessary in the circumstances of each case. The Attorney-General (Evatt) is to confer with the Chief Publicity Censor and bring up the matter for further consideration

[5] It is difficult to be confident about the documents affecting the Department of Information. It was by far the untidiest and administratively the most incompetent department in the Public Service if the state of its files can be taken as evidence. It fell far below the usual standard both in recording what it did and in the custody of its records. This part of research had to rest at some points on an examination of an assortment of papers in manila folders with nothing to reveal whether or not papers were missing.

[6] Memorandum dated 9th February on file 72/19/13. It is of passing interest that, on 2nd January, Ashley had written to a Federal member, the Hon E. J. Harrison, who had forwarded representations from a private employer and had said: "I regret I cannot act . . . because my right to approach the press and broadcasting on what specific items of news they should publish and how they should be treated is confined to news appertaining directly to the war and to national security."

[7] Memorandum from Bonney to Scullin, 28 Apr 1942, file 72/19/13.

at a later date."[8] On 27th January Mighell complained direct to Curtin about matter in certain Sydney newspapers and it was agreed that "in view of the irresponsibility which the press of New South Wales is exhibiting" a censor should be placed in the office of each paper. Bonney said this could not be done but proposed that "the offending newspapers should be punished one by one".[9] Action was deferred, however, in view of a conference arranged with the newspaper proprietors.

During the early months of the year the Premier of South Australia, Mr Playford,[1] suffered censorship of the scripts of broadcast talks he was to give over local wireless stations. In one talk a reference he made to shortage of labour, particularly in rural industry, was deleted. In another a reference unfavourable to the Government over Casey's appointment by Churchill to the Middle East was deleted. This cut was the result of a direct instruction "from the Government" on the ground that "it did not wish to spread controversy which would injure good relations between Australia and her Allies".[2]

In the course of this direct dealing with the Government, the temper of Bonney's own mind is revealed. He wrote to Curtin on 28th January 1942: "The time has come when the Press, like every other instrumentality, must realise that it is not governing the country, and must obey reasonable demands lawfully imposed."[3] On 20th April he wrote to Scullin: "I am more than ever convinced that a section of the press will never respond to kind treatment. When we are sure that a restriction is in the interests of national unity, we should, in my opinion, impose it and disregard the whimperings of an individual here and there, to whom the dividing line between liberty and licence is invisible."[4]

Some of the major issues of publicity censorship emerged at a conference summoned by Curtin in Canberra in February 1942.[5] In an opening statement Curtin expounded the Government's views. They had to withhold news from the enemy. They had to guard against the publication of matters prejudicial to security. It was also necessary to keep faith with Allied Governments and to censor what they did not wish to have released. The Government did not want to restrict the expression of opinion or criticism of policy "which responsible people in Australia think is demanded" but it did think that the Government's own views "should be fully and adequately stated and should have priority of statement".

On the difficult ground of guidance to the press, he said:

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[8] War Cabinet Minute 1752, 24 Jan 1942.

[9] Prime Minister's file B21/1/2.

[1] Hon Sir Thomas Playford, GCMG. (1st AIF: 27 Bn.) MHA SA 1933-68; Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Immigration 1938-65. B. Norton Summit, SA, 5 Jul 1896.

[2] Censorship file 357.07.

[3] Department of Information file 71/1/10.

[4] Censorship file 72/19/13.

[5] Besides the Prime Minister, the Ministers for the Army, Supply and Development, Navy, Information and the Attorney-General (six ministers), there were ten officers from seven departments, twenty-five representatives of newspapers from all States, eight representatives of the Australian Newspaper Proprietors' Association and of news services, eight representatives from the ABC and commercial broadcasting stations, and one from the United States Army—58 persons in all.

> The Government has no strong urge to organise in Australia a Government propaganda machine. We do think that there is some responsibility on the newspapers and on the broadcasting organisations to maintain national morale, and we feel that there might be some association between the officers of the Ministry of Information and the newspapers and the broadcasting organisations so that when newspapers and broadcasting stations do comment, they shall at least have some idea what the Government is actually doing or intends to do. The comment should relate to the facts.

He drew comparisons between the correspondent who relied entirely upon his own judgment "of what he believes to be facts" and the officers of the Government who must "endeavour to make certain that what is sent is correct". He urged newspapers and broadcasters to have regard to facts whether in reporting news or in editorial comment. Admitting the dangers inherent in government by regulation he pointed to the need to balance this with "the common interests of the community and the safety of the country". Newspapers and broadcasters exercised great influence and it was in their power to persuade the community to a "strength of purpose and a readiness for order to which really we are not quite accustomed, but which have become an imperative obligation".

There was formal acknowledgment of Curtin's sentiments but beyond a brief reference by Sir Keith Murdoch to the excellence of the arrangements in Great Britain, no discussion of general principles. The conference settled down to discuss particular matters about which newspapers were dissatisfied: the transfer of the Chief Publicity Censor to Canberra from Melbourne and away from the Chiefs of Staff; differing and ambiguous censorship instructions; restriction of news already known to the public (arrival of evacuees from Malaya in Western Australia and the evacuation of women and children from Darwin, Port Moresby and Rabaul were cited); restriction of stories of disaster such as occurred in the loss of *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*; "blanket" censorship about industrial disputes and about meetings of the War Cabinet and the Advisory War Council.

Curtin was the chief spokesman in countering these criticisms. The location of the Chiefs of Staff had little relevance. The only man to deal with the head of any service was the Minister and he discounted any notion that the Censor would influence the Chiefs of Staff. The inconsistent treatment of similar news items was deplored but he welcomed the opportunity to find out what newspapers wanted. News of evacuations was not allowed to be published because the enemy would learn in what areas the defences were regarded as weak. Release of detailed stories might strike "terror and alarm into the hearts of all"(the phrase was Evatt's).

At this point there was a notable difference between Government and newspaper representatives. Was "morale" helped or hindered by publication of details of bad news? The newspaper men protested that it could not be good for morale "to pass over the dangers and horrors of war" and pointed to the British who had proved that they could "take" bad news.

On blanket censorship of industrial disputes Curtin spoke at great

length and with considerable feeling. He was on difficult ground. He contended that censorship should "strip from the presentation of the facts to the public that comment by either a newspaper or an advocate of either party which can be provocative and an incitement to others". He found difficulty, however, in answering the newspapers' objections to the recent instruction that all matter on industrial disputes should be submitted to censorship. He said there was no need to persevere with the instructions. They had been issued for a special purpose—the "grievous problem in regard to coal". He pointed out that publicity attended the men making a stand for a strike while those seeking to overcome difficulties got none.

> No strike was no news and thousands of men who were observing the award never had a notice in the press, whereas the disgruntled found prominence in the public eye and became successful candidates for office in the Labour Party. Many a nitwit has achieved greatness because of the publicity he achieved as a disturber of public order. I say that frankly and with some experience of the trade union movement.

It was, however, on the newspapers' references to Advisory War Council and War Cabinet meetings (also subject to "blanket" censorship) that he became most vehement. He condemned the picture of wrangling and dissension, of Ministers being personally upset and in emotional distress, which had been given to the public. "Can you say that any public purpose whatsoever is served by creating an atmosphere of untrustworthiness and unreliability whether in Great Britain or Australia?" He alleged there had been an attempt to whip up similar agitation in the press of other countries—an attempt which the Attorney-General said had been indicated by certain cables.

Newspaper spokesmen insisted that there should be no curb on free expression of opinion but agreed that the real problem was the "prevention of the publication of mischievous falsehoods—untruths and half-truths".

The conference dealt briefly with delays in transmission of news from overseas sources—a matter of arrangement between the organisations concerned—and with the reporting of enemy claims of success, the newspaper view being that, provided the source of the claims was clearly stated, there could be no harm in letting the public know so that they could judge for themselves the credibility of the claims.

One of the instances quoted was an enemy report that Darwin had been bombed. "We know now that such claims are not true," said one newspaper editor. "It does not do our cause harm to publish these reports as enemy claims because the public judges such claims in the light of subsequent revelations of fact." The Government members, who had pleaded for fact, did not betray their secret that in the first air raid on Darwin they had issued denials and used censorship to hide from the Australian public the news of the bombing because they feared the public could not stand such bad news.

The conference had been amicable but it did not greatly change the

state of affairs.[6] In retrospect it is interesting for the light it throws on the way the Government's views on publicity censorship were taking shape. Anything the military leaders judged to be useful to the enemy or likely to endanger our own forces should be censored. Anything that damaged "morale"—and the term seems to have been meant to cover the trust in the Government—should be censored. Anything which an Allied Government asked to be withheld should be censored. Expression of opinion should be kept to limits set by "responsible people". There should be "priority" in reporting the Government's views. For the present, however, it appeared that Curtin still hoped that the newspapers and broadcasting stations would accept and apply these rules themselves.

As a further step, the Government announced on 9th April the creation of a Press Censorship Advisory Committee under Scullin as chairman.[7] In the Prime Minister's view the committee, broadly speaking, was constituted "so that newspapers as a body may express views to the Government rather than, as has hitherto been the case, by individual representatives of separate newspapers or pressmen associated with those newspapers taking a view of a certain censorship order and harassing either the censor or the Government".[8]

The committee met on 16th June when it discussed five unsatisfactory instances of censorship presented by one of the members. Then and later the complaints concerned mainly news of military operations and treatment of this news in the interests of "morale", including treatment of press messages sent overseas.[9] A recommendation of the committee was that in order to avoid confusion and to speed up censorship decisions there should be one deciding and transmitting authority from the services to the Chief Publicity Censor and that this authority should be an officer at Allied Headquarters.[1] In a subsequent meeting on 24th September the discussion was again almost entirely on censorship of news from the services, particularly New Guinea, and especially part of a report from a particular newspaper correspondent. There was some criticism of General Headquarters' communiqués. They should be fuller and more prompt. Even Scullin agreed that he would like to see "fuller and more colourful" communiqués, but only if these could be given with safety. The committee passed to discussion of an article by a member of the committee, chiefly around the question of the censor's view of what was good or bad for morale.

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[6] *Conference on Newspaper and Broadcasting Activities in Relation to the War Effort, 10 Feb 1942* (No. 1147).

[7] Members: W. O. Fairfax (*Sydney Morning Herald*), H. A. M. Campbell (Melbourne *Age*), Sir Keith Murdoch (Melbourne *Herald*), G. H. Sparrow, General President, Australian Journalists' Association. Subsequently, E. T. Kennedy, Chief Executive of Associated Newspapers (Sydney *Sun*), joined late in August 1942 (Prime Minister's press statement, No. 451, 27 Aug) after Fairfax resigned, but Fairfax attended a meeting on 24th September.

[8] In message to Chief Publicity Censor, 10 Apr 1942, file 72/26/3 Defence (Information)—Censorship.

[9] Inward and outward press messages came under the control of Publicity Censorship between March and April 1942. Advisory War Council Minute 841, 18 Mar 1942.

[1] Colonel Diller, MacArthur's Public Relations Officer, was suggested. Curtin said the matter would be discussed at a meeting of the Defence Committee on 6th July at which MacArthur would be present. For a discussion of censorship of material from operational areas see Long, *The Final Campaigns*.

Some useful purpose was probably served by the committee—most probably as the result of the character of its chairman—but he became ill towards the end of the year. It was nine months before it met again and during that period further incidents had occurred and further distrust of publicity censorship had been voiced. Curtin attended its next meeting on 12th March 1943. The committee returned to the same complaints: censorship of criticism of the High Command, inaccuracies and over-optimism in communiqués and the dissatisfaction of correspondents. Curtin countered them all with the same insistence that the effect of loose criticism on public morale must be disastrous, that the military leaders knew best what should go into communiqués,[2] and that there was no justification for allowing publication of criticism of a general or of management of campaigns which was founded on mis-statements.[3]

The committee met again on 24th May and Curtin again defended publicity censorship, criticism of which now centred on the figure of the Chief Publicity Censor in whose administration, according to a resolution they had passed, the Newspaper Proprietors' Association had "lost confidence".

It was against this background that Bonney was promoted from Chief Publicity Censor to become Director-General of Information under the new Minister. Calwell himself became chairman of the Press Censorship Advisory Committee. It would be an understatement to say that the new Minister inherited trouble. He took possession of it with alacrity.

The major contest was with the Sydney newspapers and particularly the *Daily Telegraph*. The story has been presented more often from the point of view of the newspapers than from that of the Censor and the Minister.[4] The final sequence of events might appear more clearly, however, if presented without comment as it appeared to those in authority.

After many objections made over a period of months to items that

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[2] On the particular point that the communiqué had dismissed the New Guinea campaign as "inexpensive" whereas correspondents insisted it was costly, Curtin stressed the superior view of the men who were looking at the whole campaign. But Murdoch insisted that the head of the Australian Army had made representations about communiqués.

The dissatisfaction with communiqués is recounted in the military volumes of this history. See, for example, D. McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*, pp. 225-6.

It would appear that Curtin, having dedicated himself to cooperation with MacArthur, would admit no criticism of his headquarters. In this he assumed opprobium which attached more correctly to MacArthur.

On Blamey's attitude to the press see John Hetherington, *Blamey* (1954).

[3] A correspondent whose article was the subject of the committee's discussion later wrote in a London paper, and at the instigation of Publicity Censorship Curtin protested to the British Ministry of Information. The reply via Bruce (cable No. 77, 9 Apr 1943) contained the following statement of the British viewpoint—somewhat different from the Australian:

"Censorship within United Kingdom is based on security considerations only and . . . the censors therefore have taken no action against the author or publisher of an article which merely embodies the private opinions of a journalist. According to the principles of the United Kingdom censorship the *Daily Mail* was at liberty to publish the article without reference to the censors and that newspaper did not in fact submit it before publication.

The Minister does not feel that it would be consistent with the freedom of the press to use this article as an occasion for an attempt by the United Kingdom Government to suppress the publication of comment of this kind however unwelcome it may be.

Critical articles not dissimilar in character not infrequently appear in the press here and must be accepted as part of the price paid for the undoubted advantages of a free press.

The Minister would also be unwilling to take any steps against Monks himself in view of the fact that there are no grounds for claiming that his newspaper was not entitled to publish the article."

[4] See particularly, Brian Penton, *Censored! Being a True Account of a Notable Fight for Your Right to Read and Know, with Some Comment Upon the Plague of Censorship in General* (1947).

had been published, on 30th November 1943 the Censor ordered the *Daily Telegraph* to submit all matter intended for publication. This was the extreme form of action taken for a newspaper which was thought to be irresponsible in the exercise of voluntary censorship.

Two weeks later a news item from the United States reported that voluntary press and radio censorship there had been "liberalised", and the Australian Newspaper Proprietors' Association drew invidious comparisons with the state of affairs in Australia, as they saw it. Information, they alleged, had to await some delayed statement from a Federal Minister before publication was permitted; "such an attitude leads to the belief that Ministers are more intent on securing personal publicity than on safeguarding security, although it is usually affirmed in Canberra that the censorship is not political". To this Curtin replied on 15th December by announcing:

> The Australian Government's view, which is shared by the Commander-in-Chief, is that newspapers shall be free to treat all accounts of the war as their judgment regards as proper, the only stipulation being that there shall not be conveyed to the enemy information which would be of use to him.

When challenged by Spender in the Advisory War Council about the order to the *Daily Telegraph*, Curtin repeated that "censorship was not exercised on political grounds". The *Daily Telegraph*, he said, had been a "deliberate and persistent offender" which had published information in relation to coal stoppages and coal production which the editor had known to be incorrect. The order had been challenged in the High Court and so the Council agreed to the Attorney-General's suggestion that further discussion were better left for the time being.[5] The order was withdrawn on 1st February after the *Daily Telegraph* gave a clear and definite understanding that it would abide by the censorship regulations.

The Australian Newspaper Proprietors' Association announced that they would prepare and submit evidence of their complaints. Calwell now stepped in with a statement in which he arraigned the newspaper proprietors as people who attacked "simply because they did not like the Government"; the Chief Publicity Censor should have freedom to do his duty. "With some notable exceptions the Australian press has played an inglorious part in this war. . . . No small pressure group, however influential, can be allowed to get between the Chief Publicity Censor and his duty." In announcing a meeting in the New Year of the Press Censorship Advisory Committee, he declared that he would "tell them what I think of their attitude to censorship in a nation that is at war".[6]

Warwick Fairfax as a member of the Press Censorship Advisory Committee said that the proposed meeting would be useless. In May 1943, he said, the committee had protested strongly, with concrete illustrations, against the whole trend of censorship administration as inspired by the Australian Government and the high command. No depreciation of the

[5] Advisory War Council Minute 1280, 22 Dec 1943.
[6] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 Dec 1943.

services' effort was implied, but in his opinion the public was given a rosier picture than facts really warranted. Curtin's satisfaction with the committee he dismissed as a "benign and complacent" attitude.[7]

Bonney now joined the open combat on the side of his Minister. ". . . as Chief Censor I am working for the nation and am not a servant of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association." Advice was available to him from the services and from the security services, and he left it to the public "to judge whether the advice of these people . . . is not of more value to the security of this country than the arm-chair advice of any newspaper proprietor whose own writings are subject to the security requirements of censorship".[8] To this the Australian Newspaper Proprietors' Association replied that, if the policy was as Curtin had defined it, then censorship should deal only with news likely to convey military information. Newspapers objected to censorship based not on security but on public morale which, they believed, would thrive best on the fullest facts. They objected to Bonney implying that as a public servant he had a higher sense of the common weal than a newspaperman could have.[9]

The controversy was still simmering when, on 25th February 1944, A. G. Cameron raised in the House the question of censorship of the mail of members, and submitted a motion "that the opening by censors of letters addressed to members . . . at Parliament House, Canberra, or at the rooms occupied by Federal members in a State capital city, is a breach of the privilege of Parliament".[1] Curtin's contention was that all mail—but particularly that coming from the forces—was of necessity subject to censorship. The Opposition's chief contention was that civilians should feel free to write unreservedly to members, and that if there was a risk of censorship, they would be unable to do so. Evatt suggested a committee, and Cameron agreed to withdraw his motion on the understanding that the committee would be established, would be appointed by the Prime Minister and party leaders, and would report promptly. A Committee of Privileges was appointed, and Cameron's complaint referred to it. The report, tabled on 31st March,[2] found that opening members' mail did not constitute a breach of existing privilege; nor had Cameron's mail been subjected to any special scrutiny or discrimination. At the time of his complaint, and the debate in the House, other matters concerning censorship of mail, including that to other citizens, had been mentioned, but the committee felt this was outside its jurisdiction.

Almost every facet of censorship had become the subject of comment or criticism in the publicity which was given to Cameron's complaint. The Sydney press expressed a hope that publicity censorship would be the

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[7] *Daily Telegraph*, 20 Dec 1943.
[8] *Daily Telegraph*, 21 Dec 1943.
[9] *Daily Telegraph*, 22 Dec 1943.
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 630. The reference was, of course, to the activities of *communications* censorship.
[2] Parliamentary Papers 1943-44, No. F2210, *Report from the Standing Committee of Privileges Relating to Censorship of Members' Correspondence.*

subject of inquiry along with the more particular points Cameron raised, and there was much use of words like "snoopers" and "Gestapo" in referring to censorship methods.

In February an article in a Melbourne paper had alleged that information from censored correspondence had led to prosecutions under rationing regulations, and Spender asked a series of questions about this in the House. The War Cabinet discussed the matter and passed it to the Advisory War Council.[3] Their recommendation was that an all-party committee should be set up to review the censorship of communications and to "recommend in the light of existing circumstances what course should be followed". Publicity censorship was to be brought before the committee. Calwell had urged the Prime Minister to reject the plea for an inquiry. The all-party committee produced an interim report on 15th June, dealing almost exclusively with communications censorship.[4] In the meantime the controversy between the Sydney press and publicity censorship had led to one of the liveliest incidents of the wartime domestic scene.

In commending the move to set up the committee to investigate Cameron's complaint the Sydney press had expressed the hope that the terms would include investigation into publicity censorship alleging that it had developed "an unblushing political character, a zest for suppression, and a fussy preoccupation with matters supposed to relate to public morale".[5] Censorship of news had degenerated from an instrument of security into "a system of suppression and distortion". Examples were found in the censorship of despatches sent by correspondents to newspapers overseas as well as in the censorship of news to be published in Australia and when the Government complained of the bad impression of the Australian war effort given in newspapers overseas, the Australian Newspaper Proprietors' Association laid the blame on the inefficiency and bungling of the Department of Information. The newspapers were now clearly engaged on a campaign to discredit the Department of Information and its Minister.

The controversy was becoming much wider than the original issue of censorship of particular items. Neither side restrained itself in the use of provocative words. One condition of censorship was that no indication could be given by a newspaper of any excisions or modifications which the Censor might have demanded in a report. On 15th April, the *Daily*

[3] War Cabinet Minute 3349, 6 Mar; Agendum 115/1944, Supplement No. 1; Advisory War Council Minute 1315, 7 Mar. See also Appendix 7, "Censorship Reports as a Guide to Public Opinion".

[4] Department of Defence file 1351. The committee consisted of Evatt (chairman), J. M. Fraser, Ashley, Foll, A. G. Cameron, Calwell and Abbott. Forde had resigned the chair when he became Acting Prime Minister during Curtin's absence.

Subsequently a commission under National Security (Inquiries) Regulations was issued to Sir William Webb to report on "Postal, Telegraph and Telephonic Censorship, having regard to the interim report of the Parliamentary Committee on Censorship of [15th] June 1944". His report, dated 11th August 1944, found "no evidence warranting any adverse finding. On the contrary, communications censorship appears to have been exercised solely for the purposes for which it was introduced, that is, for national security and the successful prosecution of the war." He deplored minor breaches of rationing regulations being detected by censorship but found censorship officers and liaison officers "capable and trustworthy and . . . the methods employed sound and efficient".

[5] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 Mar 1944.

Telegraph appeared with three columns blank on page 3. The implication was obvious that the item had been cut out by the Censor. Two days earlier Henderson,[6] as president of the Australian Newspaper Proprietors' Association, had said that "because of censorship most correspondents of American papers have been withdrawn from Australia, and for the same reason Australian correspondents have not been able to inform their papers truly of Australia's great effort".[7] The accuracy or not of this statement apart, this was a reiteration of the theme which the press had pursued for some time, that censorship of matter leaving Australia had precluded them from giving a correct picture of Australian conditions. Calwell replied, and Henderson proposed to publish an answer including a list of deletions made by censorship to overseas cables. The Censor deleted this list. Bonney argued that the Censor had no option, "under the terms of the Press and Broadcasting Censorship Order, which has been in existence throughout the whole of the war, but to disallow publication of any matter indicating censorship treatment".[8] It was on this question whether publication of matter could be made in such a way as to indicate excisions that the Sydney metropolitan press joined battle with censorship.

The Censor, anticipating continued defiance, on the following day (Sunday, 16th April), consulted the Solicitor-General, and an Order to Submit was served on Consolidated Press. Nevertheless the *Sunday Telegraph* front page on the 16th carried two blank columns, headed by pictures of Henderson and Calwell, with a bold-type paragraph which read:

? A FREE PRESS ?

The great American democrat Thomas Jefferson said: "Where the Press is free and every man able to read all is safe."

Officers of the paper were told that "serious consequences" must follow an attempt to publish in this form, but the *Sunday Telegraph* began distribution. Commonwealth police, under instructions from the Censor, accordingly visited the premises and impounded the remaining undistributed copies.

On the following morning the *Sydney Morning Herald* (which then had no Sunday publication) reported the suppression of the *Sunday Telegraph*, and then announced:

The Sydney morning newspapers today publish material which they have been ordered by the Commonwealth publicity censorship not to publish.

The newspapers have done this after consulting eminent counsel, who advise them that the publication of this material is lawful, and that the Censor's action in ordering its suppression is without lawful authority.

They have no means, except by such publication, of testing the legality of the Censor's order.

Elsewhere was a picture of the front page of the *Telegraph* which had been suppressed. Ordered to remove the material (which included Hender-

[6] R. A. G. Henderson, General Manager, *Sydney Morning Herald* 1938-49, Managing Director John Fairfax & Sons Ltd 1949-64. B. Sydney, 26 Feb 1896.

[7] Letter from Bonney to Knowles (Solicitor-General), 17 Apr.

[8] Letter from Bonney to Knowles, 17 Apr.

son's message and the excisions) the *Sydney Morning Herald* refused, and so it and all other Sydney newspapers (who had joined in the battle on the side of the *Daily Telegraph*) were suppressed for the 17th. Three separate applications had been made to the High Court, and on the 18th an injunction from the Full Bench restrained the Commonwealth Government and the censors from endeavouring by any means to prevent publication of articles and editorials relating to the censorship published in Monday's papers, and banned by the censors. On the 18th (Tuesday) papers came out as usual, but with the suppressed editions issued as supplements, and with numerous pictures of "incidents" in the seizure of papers by Commonwealth police officers.

A feature of the whole affair, as of press-censorship relations generally at this period, had been the bitter personal element. As a private member the Minister was alleged to have been hostile to the press. Certainly he had said some hard things about newspapers. The press in turn directed its attack at the Minister. On occasion they chose to feature this divergence between the Minister, and the "policy of the Government"; and Calwell offered opportunities for them to picture him as an embarrassment to his party.[9] The *Daily Telegraph* announced: "Calwell is the Enemy"; "The Australian Press is fighting a Calwell dictatorship not the Labour Government."[10]

On 22nd April the High Court considered the case, and proceedings continued on 5th May, when the Commonwealth applied for the discharge of the original order restraining the Censor. The following day the Chief Justice, Sir John Latham, suggested a conference as a more suitable manner of resolving the difficulties. The result appeared in a code of Censorship Principles announced by Forde on 19th May:

1. Censorship shall be imposed exclusively for reasons of defence security.
2. Owing to the many and changing phases of the war "defence security" cannot be exhaustively defined. Primarily "defence security" relates to the armed forces of all the Allied Nations and to all the operations of war. It covers the suppression of information useful to the enemy. It may at times include particular aspects of Australian wartime relationship with other countries. Censorship shall not be imposed merely for the maintenance of morale or the prevention of despondency or alarm. Censorship shall not prevent the reporting of industrial disputes or stoppages. Criticism and complaint, however strongly expressed, shall not be a ground for censorship. "Defence security" shall be the governing principle for every application of censorship.
3. The Censorship Order in its present form does not expressly require censors to exercise their powers on grounds that relate exclusively to considerations of "defence security". Therefore the Government proposes to make an amendment to the existing order making it clear that the censor's directions shall

[9] McKell, the New South Wales Labour Premier, had announced that the New South Wales police were not involved in the seizure of newspapers. Calwell telegraphed that the Premier should take steps to discipline his police chief, who should have been prepared to uphold the Commonwealth's authority. To which McKell countered that he strongly resented the suggestion, and could not acknowledge the Minister's right to determine matters of State administration. "Action on your part to ascertain facts before arriving at conclusions and forwarding telegram in terms of yours would have been more in keeping with ministerial dignity. This rash and ill-considered approach typical of conduct which has already seriously embarrassed my government." (Telegram reported 20 Apr.)

[10] On 23rd April 1944.

be given solely in relation to the requirements of "defence security" as existing at the time of publication of the matter in question. In the case of a prosecution the onus of proof will be on the prosecutor.

4. Except in case of immediate and obvious danger to "defence security" a breach of censorship directions shall be dealt with by prosecution and not by seizure of the proposed publication. In any court proceedings following a seizure the onus of justifying the seizure will rest on those responsible for authorising it.

3—CARRYING OUT THE DECISIONS OF OCTOBER 1943

Measures to give effect to the decisions of October 1943[1] for the adjustment of the war effort provided the main business of War Cabinet through the greater part of 1944. The broad effect of those October decisions was that the army and the so-called "Munitions-Aircraft bloc" were each to release 20,000 men for the sake of the production of military and civil supplies; and their regular intake of new manpower was reduced.

The application of these decisions necessarily brought about a further reconsideration of other phases of Australian participation in the war. It was a question not only of determining the size of the forces which Australia could maintain but also the military role which these forces were to play. Moreover, the fact that more American forces were arriving in the South-West Pacific meant on the one hand that, at the same time as greater demands were being made for Australia to produce food and other supplies for the Allied troops, there was a lesser demand for Australian troops in operations.

As a step preliminary to dealing with this problem, the Government re-examined the procedures for handling claims for supplies and works and the consequential requirement for manpower. Under directions given by the War Cabinet in January 1942 and subsequently[2] each of the services was required to submit quarterly, where practicable, and in any event half-yearly, a consolidated programme of its requirements of munitions items. The Defence Committee reviewed the programmes and made recommendations, through the Minister for Defence, to War Cabinet. The programmes, as finally approved by War Cabinet, were referred to the War Commitments Committee to consider the availability of manpower. In confirming these arrangements, at a meeting on 3rd November 1943, War Cabinet made it clear that the responsibility of the Defence Committee was limited to making a general review of the programmes submitted to ensure that they were appropriate to the strategic situation and the nature and scale of expected operations, and corresponded to the forces to be maintained during the period of the programme. It was to be the responsibility of the War Commitments Committee to examine the decisions of War Cabinet as to production and to report to the Minister for Defence upon any manpower questions arising therefrom which were considered to require consideration by the Minister or by

[1] See Chapter 5, Section 2 above.

[2] War Cabinet Minutes 1815, 2149, 2503, 2616, 2771 and 2774.

War Cabinet. Proposals for works were originated by various departments, each of which had the responsibility for ensuring that the proposals were essential and in conformity with policy. The responsibility of the Defence Committee was limited to the allocation of appropriate priorities to projects submitted to it.[3] From time to time these procedures were in fact used to review claims and projects and to reduce demands on manpower. The main adjustments, however, still had to be made by War Cabinet itself rather than by the instrumentalities of government because the major decisions were still essentially political decisions.

The decisions of War Cabinet of 1st October and the information on which they were based had been forwarded to MacArthur and his assistance was sought in giving effect to the changes.[4] Early in December, in Brisbane, Curtin discussed the situation with MacArthur and it was later reported to the Advisory War Council that MacArthur had said that it was, of course, a matter entirely for the Australian Government to decide the extent and nature of its own war effort and had "expressed his full agreement with the general principles laid down".[5]

There does not appear to be any formal record of the conversation between MacArthur and Curtin in Brisbane but the Australian viewpoint is indicated in a letter which Curtin addressed to the Commander-in-Chief on 22nd November 1943, suggesting that the talk be arranged. Curtin specifically had in mind, in addition to the broad question of balancing the Australian war effort, a discussion concerning the area in which the Australian forces assigned to MacArthur were to be employed in the future, and he drew attention in his letter to three factors. First, Australia had "a special interest in the employment of its own forces in the operations for the ejectment of the enemy from territory under its own administration" (i.e. the Australian territory of Papua and the mandated territory of New Guinea and adjacent islands). Second, the original directive to MacArthur made it essential to inform the Australian Government of any proposal to use its forces outside Australia and the mandated territory and, in the course of his letter, Curtin also recalled an official memorandum which had been furnished to Dr Evatt in Washington in 1942 in amplification of the directive and which explicitly said that each of the nations whose forces or land possessions were involved in military operations in the South-West Pacific Area retained the power to refuse the use of its forces for any project which it considered inadvisable. Third, the Australian Government must have regard to the limit on the employment of the Citizen Forces which was imposed by the *Defence (Citizen Military Forces) Act, 1943*, and must also exercise effectively its responsibility to the people of Australia in respect of the employment of Australian forces. Hence, while the Australian Government did not desire to interfere in any way with MacArthur's conduct of operations or to participate in the formulation of plans and while it had the utmost

[3] War Cabinet Minute 3119, 3 Nov 1943; Agendum 455/1943, 30 Oct 1943.
[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1253, 11 Nov 1943.
[5] Advisory War Council Minute 1270, 9 Dec 1943.

confidence in MacArthur's handling of these matters, Curtin wanted to learn something of "prospective plans in regard to the use of the Australian land forces, in order that the Australian Government may consider their contemplated use". In a reply of 24th November, MacArthur assured Curtin of his willingness to acquaint him with "everything that is within my scope and knowledge", and presumably, in their conversation in Brisbane, did so.

In New Guinea in September Australian forces had captured Lae and Salamaua and then made a successful landing at Finschhafen, the object being to gain control of the Vitiaz Strait and thus make possible the seizure of bases in western New Britain. In November the 9th Division around Finschhafen defeated a final Japanese counter-attack and took the dominating heights of Sattelberg. By mid-December the enemy was in full retreat towards the Sepik.

The Australian Army had now virtually done its job on the mainland of New Guinea east of the Sepik, and its strength was largely spent. It had borne the main burden of the fighting on land in New Guinea from the outset. The landing of American forces at Arawe in New Britain on 15th December and at Cape Gloucester on 26th December marked the opening of a new phase in which MacArthur's American forces would form the spearheads. Already in November American forces of the South Pacific Area had established themselves on Bougainville.

A policy directive for the use of the Australian Army in the new phase was signed by General Blamey on 23rd December. It provided for the gradual relief of the Australian Military Forces in forward operations in New Guinea by American forces. The 7th and 9th Divisions (comprising, with the 6th Division, the I Australian Corps) would be withdrawn to the mainland for training and rehabilitation, and the components of the II Australian Corps (3rd, 5th and 11th Divisions) would be employed on garrison duties, or engaged in training and rehabilitation on the mainland or in New Guinea. When the relief was complete there would remain in New Guinea a corps of approximately two jungle divisions, plus base troops.[6] At the time when the policy directive was issued the 6th Division was on the mainland; the 7th and 9th Divisions had been in New Guinea since July and August 1943. (The 7th had had an earlier period of six months in New Guinea from August 1942 to February 1943.) Some militia brigades had been in New Guinea since 1942.

Early in 1944 the assignment of Australian forces to the South-West Pacific Area was reviewed, having regard to the return of the A.I.F. divisions, the reorganisation of the A.M.F. and the development of the R.A.A.F., and a new decision was taken by the War Cabinet specifying the Australian forces under MacArthur's command. The decision followed the decision of April 1942 in virtually placing all combat sections of the Australian defence forces under the Commander-in-Chief, subject to the

[6] War Cabinet Minute 3264, 21 Jan 1944, and Advisory War Council file "Role of Australian Forces in the Pacific".

Defence (Citizen Military Forces) Act, 1943, and the Proclamation of 19th February 1943 defining the limits of the area in which members of the Citizen Military Forces might be required to serve. The forces assigned consisted, in the main, of the following:

Naval—Four cruisers, four L.S.I., four destroyers, two sloops, 35 mine-sweeping vessels and four auxiliary anti-submarine vessels.

Army—The First Australian Army (three divisions, plus two brigades and corps troops). The Second Australian Army (one division plus ancillaries). The New Guinea Force (four divisions, plus one brigade and corps troops). The III Australian Corps (one division plus corps troops including an armoured brigade group). The Northern Territory Force (one division plus ancillaries), and the L.H.Q. Reserve (an armoured brigade group).[7]

Air—Thirty-six combat squadrons and all the associated establishment except transport squadrons.[8]

In February 1944 the 1st American Cavalry Division had seized the Admiralty Islands. In March the Americans occupied Emirau Island. The encirclement of Rabaul, site of the big Japanese advanced naval base and of the headquarters of their *Eighth Area Army*, was now complete.

The general strategical situation was described by the Australian Defence Committee in a review dated 25th March 1944, prepared at the direction of the War Cabinet, as follows:

United States Naval Forces of considerably greater strength than those of the Japanese, assisted by carrier-borne aircraft and long-range bombers, dominate the Pacific through the Gilberts and the Marshalls as far as Truk and the Marianas. Truk is no longer usable as a principal naval base in the Pacific, the Japanese having been forced to use Palau as their most advanced Pacific Naval Base.

The Indian Ocean is controlled by the Eastern Fleet, the strength of which is gradually being built up. At present, it consists of three capital ships, two or three carriers, eight heavy cruisers, five light cruisers and about 24 destroyers, plus escort vessels. It is possible, however, at present for the Japanese to concentrate a force superior to this fleet.

Continuous Allied submarine patrols are being maintained in all areas where enemy shipping or men-o'-war are likely to be met.

The greater part of New Guinea, part of New Britain, part of the Admiralty Islands, and practically the whole of the Solomons are directly under Allied military and air control. The remainder of New Britain, New Ireland, Rabaul and Kavieng are neutralised by shore-based air attack and blockade by sea and air. The maintenance by the enemy of his forces in these areas will become increasingly difficult.

Allied surface forces are operating freely in the Bismarck Archipelago and make possible seaborne landings in New Guinea, when and where necessary, which would result in the isolation of Japanese forces along the north coast of New Guinea.

Merauke on the south coast of New Guinea is in our hands and A.I.F. patrols are infiltrating beyond the Eilanden River.

Timor and the islands to the eastward form the nearest enemy-occupied territory to Australia.

Considerable facilities for enemy forces, both naval and air, exist in the Singapore-Surabaya area, and it is known that strong enemy forces have been based in those areas.

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[7] The two armoured divisions had been broken up in 1943, but two armoured brigade groups had been retained.

[8] War Cabinet Minute 3285, 21 Jan 1944; Agendum 30/1944.

The total strength of the Australian land forces in October 1943 had been 457,000. Since December 1941 a total of 147,000 had served in New Guinea and Papua. The total casualties sustained there to 30th October were 9,423 (including 3,275 dead). About 60 per cent of the troops engaged had been A.I.F. and they had suffered about 78 per cent of the casualties. The A.I.F. divisions, however, were not wholly composed of veterans. The 6th Division had received 5,500 new troops since it returned from the Middle East; the 7th Division 10,000; and the 9th had been freshened with 6,000 reinforcements which had been sent to the Middle East but had not been in action and 2,000 men posted to it since its return to Australia.[9]

Three months later, after the successful completion of the Huon Peninsula campaign, the Advisory War Council was informed that the number of Australian troops in New Guinea would be reduced to 49,000 by June.[1]

At that time (February), the relative strengths of the United States and Australian land forces in New Guinea were 174,731 Americans and 112,876 Australians. Their respective share in the operations during the previous two years was revealed by the higher Australian casualties, the estimated losses in operations in New Guinea and adjacent islands up to the end of January 1944 being 8,032 Americans (2,906 killed; 3,541 wounded and 1,585 missing) and 10,470 Australians (3,298 killed, 6,916 wounded and 256 missing).[2] The Americans had, of course, taken the larger share in the naval and air operations.

In accordance with Blamey's policy directive of December 1943, the greater part of the 7th and 9th Divisions returned to the mainland in February and March 1944, and the organisation of the three A.I.F. divisions as "jungle divisions" to form an offensive force proceeded. By 1st July the 5th Division (4th, 8th and 15th Brigades) was forward in New Guinea, the 11th (6th and 23rd Brigades) was around Wau, and the 11th Brigade was at Merauke in Dutch New Guinea.

For the time being the effective policy controlling the armed services was the manpower decisions of October 1943. The services continued to struggle to retain their men, but the Government's decision, strongly backed by the Country Party members of the Advisory War Council, prevailed and the withdrawal of men for industry, and rural industry in particular, continued.

In October War Cabinet had directed that the release of 15,000 experienced rural workers from the services and from the munitions and aircraft industries should be regarded as an urgent priority, but difficulties were encountered. On the one hand farmers were unwilling to accept labour other than that which they nominated for release from the services, predominantly sons and relatives previously employed on the farm, and they were unwilling or unable to pay award rates to new labour. On the other hand few men in munitions work would return to rural work and

[9] Advisory War Council Minute 1249, 11 Nov 1943.
[1] Advisory War Council Minute 1295, 15 Feb 1944.
[2] Advisory War Council Minute 1298, 15 Feb 1944.

the War Commitments Committee commented that it would be unrealistic to expect that it was administratively and politically possible to force any large-scale return of industrial workers to permanent farm work while the demand for such workers for secondary industries, at considerably higher wage rates and far superior working conditions, continued.[3] The services and the "Munitions-Aircraft bloc", having been called upon by the October 1943 decisions to yield up 20,000 men, were watchful to ensure that they were not regarded by other claimants as simply a reservoir of manpower. In the case of the "Munitions-Aircraft bloc" the difficulty was increased by indefiniteness about what undertakings were covered by the word "bloc" and by the fact that increasing commitments for Allied supplies were perpetually raising the demands on branches of production which came under the control of the Munitions Department.

By decision on 21st December 1943, War Cabinet required the Director-General of Manpower to "facilitate to the maximum extent the transfer of persons who seek release from the Munitions-Aircraft bloc to return to high-priority industries such as rural, timber, transport, food processing, and that he release all personnel desirous of enlisting for aircrews". It was essential, the War Cabinet agreed, that a policy of "selective releases" be pursued to the greatest extent possible and also varied the traditional rule of "last on first off" by saying that the war effort would suffer if persons were released who could not be placed in essential industries or in the services, or if munitions establishments retained fit young men of the type required for the services or men required for industry other than munitions production. Men with rural experience should be made available for rural industries.[4]

The decision reveals clearly the reversed importance of industries and the new role of Australia. The essential industries were now those engaged in producing materials or foodstuffs or rendering services such as transport.

The demands for labour for food production were not readily met. A meeting of the Food Executive on 29th and 30th December 1943 reported to War Cabinet that for lack of manpower Australia was still unable to produce foodstuffs in the form and at the time required. Although 15,000 men were to be released for rural industries from the Munitions and Aircraft "bloc" and from the services, the response from munitions workers had been "very poor indeed", and of 5,986 recommendations submitted to the army up to 13th December only 874 had been approved. Food processing was also adversely affected by the labour shortage. The War Cabinet referred the complaint to the War Commitments Committee.[5]

Meanwhile the War Commitments Committee, in accordance with the instructions given by War Cabinet on 1st October, was undertaking a review of the manpower position at the end of 1943. There was some

[3] War Cabinet Minute 3523, 3 May 1944; Agendum 80/1944 and Supplement No. 1 and 215/1944.
[4] War Cabinet Minute 3233, 21 Dec 1943.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 3289, 21 Jan; Agendum 40/1944.

delay and hesitation in reaching decisions on their findings. The report prepared after meetings of the Committee on 15th December 1943 and 17th January 1944 was not considered by the War Cabinet until 6th March 1944, and was then deferred pending the receipt of reports from service Ministers which Curtin had sought.

When it was again brought forward in a revised and extended form, the report was again deferred so that it might be considered in conjunction with a review of the war effort which had been prepared by the Defence Committee.[6]

The deferring of the submission on manpower appears to have been due largely to a realisation early in 1944 that, beyond the readjustment in the Australian war effort because of manpower difficulties, there had arisen a broader question of reconsidering the whole of the war effort in the light of the changed strategical outlook.

Discharges from the army had already increased. In response to questions by Fadden, who urged the importance of the "food front", Blamey told the Advisory War Council on 20th January 1944 that from 1st November 1943 to 15th January 1944 13,562 applications for discharge had been received and 5,121 had been approved. Members of the Council complained at the slowness in dealing with the applications and to the reluctance of men discharged from the army or from war industry to undertake rural labour at the rates which farmers, accustomed to family labour, would offer. The Prime Minister told them that he, too, was disappointed at the small proportion of released labour that went to food production. The Government was reviewing the whole position and had before it proposals "which might involve the compulsory employment of labour for private enterprise".

Curtin appears to have had momentary misgivings. On 20th January he told the Advisory War Council that he did not favour a solution of the problem at the expense of the army, in view of the potential Japanese strength in the northern areas. There was also the aspect that the prospective scale of operations in this theatre would determine the limits of the contribution which Australia could make for naval and air force commitments and supplies for other theatres.

His misgivings, however, delayed but did not alter the carrying out of the adjustment.

Up to the middle of February 1944 about 6,000 workers had been added to the rural labour force. To obtain the maximum use of army personnel to provide seasonal labour for rural industries, the War Commitments Committee recommended in February that there should be compulsory direction of army personnel to such work at award rates and current munition conditions but this was not done.[7]

These decisions of War Cabinet on 3rd May 1944 did not make any significant variation in the decisions of October 1943, but chiefly con-

[6] War Cabinet Minutes 3353, 6 Mar 1944, and 3466 of 19 Apr; Agendum 80/1944 and Supplement.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 3523, 3 May 1944; Agendum 80/1944 and Supplement No. 1, and 215/1944.

cerned the means by which the objectives of October could be attained. The war effort of the services was still limited; the parallel role of Australia as a provider of supplies and services was reaffirmed and the importance of foodstuff production in the discharging of that role was reasserted.

The reorganisation and the attempts to build up an offensive force of three divisions on the mainland were being carried out side by side with the manpower adjustments and in May the Department of the Army reported a deficiency in the manpower requirements of the offensive force of about 20,000 personnel "in connection with the primary task of operations against the enemy now being planned". In addition provision would have to be made to repair deficiencies in the New Guinea Force and to maintain it in the field. Between 1st October 1943 and 30th April 1944 there had been a net loss in manpower to the army of over 44,000, for 47,919 personnel had been discharged and 1,802 had died and the monthly intake had been only 797 instead of the War Cabinet's allocation of 1,500 (550 men and 950 women). A considerable number of units on the mainland had been disbanded to provide personnel to meet the deficiency in the requirements of the offensive force but this made only a relatively small contribution.

The kernel of the situation as seen from the military side—to fight or not to fight—was plainly put in a letter, dated 23rd May 1944, from the Acting Minister for the Army to the Acting Prime Minister, Forde, during Curtin's absence in England, as follows:

> The situation has now arisen where it will be necessary for the Government to inform the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area, that owing to the manpower situation, the Australian Military Forces will, of necessity, have to be relieved of a substantial portion of its present task in providing garrisons in New Guinea and elsewhere, and the operations of the offensive force must be delayed in order that provision of the necessary manpower can be arranged. In addition, one of the A.I.F. Divisional Task Forces cannot be employed for a considerable time, as the manpower is not available to bring it up to strength and provide for maintenance. . . . The issue which is now a matter for decision by the Government is whether the direct contribution of the Australian Army to operations in the South-West Pacific Area is to be reduced, and the food front maintained and increased. It is also for decision whether the army is to provide the manpower, or whether the other sources of manpower are to be fully exploited and diverted to rural industry.

On 23rd May a new priority was declared for the dairying industry, which still had not obtained the 10,000 men allocated to it in January 1944 out of the 15,000 allocated for agriculture in October 1943. The army was directed to re-examine applications and release as many men as possible in the interests of dairying. The Civil Constructional Corps and the Munitions and Aircraft "bloc" were to be "combed to the fullest practicable extent" to obtain men for dairying and the services and departments were to draw the attention of personnel to the manpower position

and invite persons previously engaged in the industry to seek their release.[8] Cabinet shrank from a proposal to reduce the butter ration.[9]

Then, at this point of time, the Munitions "bloc" again pointed to the fact that many of the new and increasing demands for supplies could only be met by production by agencies within the "bloc" and that it needed more, not fewer men. War Cabinet was eventually obliged in June 1944 to require a sub-committee of the War Commitments Committee to keep the commitments of the "bloc" under review and report regularly on its manpower requirements.[1]

Early in the year two months' leave without pay was granted to soldiers to return to employment in the coal-mining industry and when this period expired a further six months' leave was approved.[2]

The sugar industry in Queensland was also in difficulties and exceptional measures were taken to obtain cane-cutters from the army and from other sources, including the Civil Aliens Corps.[3]

A significant contribution to the supply of rural workers was now being made by Italian prisoners of war. The Government had agreed in April 1941 to accept the custody of up to 50,000 prisoners of war from the Middle East, the United Kingdom Government accepting financial responsibility. Because of the shortage of ships, however, only 6,000 then arrived. On 14th May 1943 the War Cabinet approved the acceptance of up to 10,000 additional Italian prisoners then in India. At the same time it directed that the employment of prisoners on farms and in other work should be arranged by the Director-General of Manpower. Their hours of work were to be those ordinarily applying in industry and their pay a minimum of £1 a week subject to revision upward by the Department of Labour and National Service and the Director-General of Manpower. The objective was to be the contribution by employers of full award rates when the prisoners were capable of earning them. By August 1944 there were 14,720 Italian and 1,585 German prisoners in Australia. Of the Italians 10,200 "other ranks" were then employed on farms and at hostels; 2,500 more "other ranks" were soon to be sent out to employment, plus 200 officers, who had volunteered for farm work.

4—THE EFFECTS OF THE CHANGED STRATEGY

While the Government was wrestling with the problems of the adjustment of the Australian war effort and the reallocation of manpower, decisions of high policy were being taken elsewhere that brought a change of strategy for the defeat of Japan. At the Cairo Conference in November-December 1943 Churchill, Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek, with their respective military and diplomatic advisers, discussed the war

[8] War Cabinet Minute 3551, 23 May 1944.
[9] War Cabinet Minute 3554, 23 May 1944.
[1] War Cabinet Minute 3612, 12 Jun 1944; Agendum 310/1944.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 3552, 23 May 1944.
[3] War Cabinet Agendum 277/1944.

against Japan and pledged themselves to persevere in "the serious and prolonged operations which are necessary to procure the unconditional surrender of Japan". The official communiqué published after the conference said that the several military missions had agreed upon future military operations against Japan.

Whatever the Australian Government learnt about the Cairo Conference they learnt after the discussions had been completed and the indications are that they did not gain their knowledge all at once but bit by bit in the succeeding months.

In January 1944 the Australian Government learnt that the United Kingdom Government was making available a naval task force for operations in the Pacific. It would comprise the battle cruiser *Renown*, the aircraft carriers *Illustrious* and *Victorious*, four cruisers, twelve destroyers (including some "N" and "Q" class ships of the R.A.N.) and three supply ships. The force would probably operate under the command of Admiral Nimitz and use would be made of the facilities available at Sydney for maintenance and stores.[4]

At this stage a puzzling Japanese move took place. The Japanese Combined Fleet, which had been at Truk for many months, suddenly departed, and part of it arrived at Singapore late in February. When MacArthur learnt of this he was on the eve of his invasion of the Admiralties. He decided that the appearance of part of the Japanese Fleet (including two capital ships) at Singapore might portend a foray against Fremantle, and on 28th February he ordered General Kenney to prepare to send strong air reinforcements to Western Australia.

On 4th March Curtin asked Churchill whether, in view of the recent American attacks on Truk and the movement of the Japanese Fleet from that base, a Japanese incursion into the Indian Ocean was probable, and whether it was possible for the Japanese to attempt a diversion to relieve the pressure in the Pacific. If so, would they attempt anything more than raids and what were the probable objectives and Allied capacity to repel such attacks? This cablegram crossed one from Churchill in which the opinion was expressed that the fleet had been withdrawn because Truk had become too exposed. It was not thought that serious danger either to India or Western Australia was likely to develop, but this did not preclude the possibility of occasional offensive sorties.

On 4th March, however, two Japanese battleships, escorted by destroyers, left Singapore in the direction of Surabaya. The Australian Chiefs of Staff reported on 8th March that all local defences at Fremantle had been manned, submarines were forming a patrol to seaward, steps had been taken to clear Fremantle harbour of shipping, and air reinforcements had been sent to the west coast.[5] On 17th March a radar station reported an unidentified aircraft approaching Geraldton. Consequently an air raid warning was sounded in Perth and air raid wardens went to

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1284, 20 Jan 1944.

[5] These moves which involved seven RAAF squadrons are described in G. Odgers, *Air War Against Japan, 1943-1945* (1957), in the Air series of this history.

their posts, but no attack developed. A fortnight later it was reported that most of the Japanese naval forces had been moved from Singapore to Davao in the Philippine Islands.[6] From 20th March onwards the R.A.A.F. squadrons that had been sent to the west moved back to their former stations.[7]

It may have been this incident, or it may have been a question directed to him in Parliament and answered on 2nd March, that made Curtin more acutely conscious that only sketchy information had been provided about the decisions reached at Cairo concerning British plans for participation in the war in the Pacific.[8] Certainly he cabled to Churchill on 4th March to ask whether he could be informed of the progress of the planning. On the 11th Churchill replied that two broad conceptions were being examined: one that the main British effort should be directed against the Malay barrier using India as the main base; and the other that the bulk of the naval forces, with certain land and air forces, should operate on the left flank of the United States forces in the Pacific with Australia as their main base. Before reaching a decision the relative base potentialities of India and Australia should be known, and he proposed that Britain should send small parties of administrative experts to Australia.

Curtin consulted MacArthur, Blamey and the Chiefs of Staff about this proposal, and, largely on Blamey's advice, he replied to London that Australia had already supplied substantial information about facilities in Australia to the Admiralty, the War Office and the Air Ministry and other sources of information were readily available. United Kingdom representatives would be welcome but it might be preferable to defer their movement until plans had progressed further, when the best results would probably be obtained by sending "representatives of the staffs and advance parties of the forces concerned". He added that "a separate system of command could not be established" and that "the administrative experts sent to Australia should be attached to the staffs of the respective Australian Services".

The Admiralty had already appointed Rear-Admiral C. S. Daniel and a staff to make investigations in the South-West Pacific. Curtin's telegram caused Churchill to delay their arrival, but on 28th April, with Australian consent, Daniel was instructed to make the last lap of his journey to Australia. A proposal to send a larger group was postponed until the meeting of Dominion Prime Ministers in London early in May.

In the first week of the Prime Ministers' meeting, when the war against Japan was brought under consideration, Curtin gave an account of the Australian decisions of October 1943 for the re-balancing of the war effort and referred to the representations made to the United Kingdom Government and the lack of any reply to them. He then raised the question of

[6] Advisory War Council Minute 1330, 5 Apr 1944.

[7] The Japanese Fleet was withdrawn from Truk because it feared American carrier attacks, which in fact were launched on 17th and 18th February, a few days after the ships had gone.

[8] See *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 949.

basing United Kingdom forces in Australia and welcomed the proposals, although at the same time emphasising the questions of principle and procedure to which he had referred in his telegram of 22nd March, namely that regard should be paid to the existing Allied and Australian arrangements in the South-West Pacific and that the capacity to base British forces on Australia and to provide for their requirements would have to be considered by the Australian Government at the highest level, in view of the Australian manpower problem and the relationship of new demands to existing commitments to the United States and the United Kingdom.

At a meeting of the Defence Committee on 10th May a statement of the British forces available for a Pacific strategy was presented. It pictured a fleet of 4 battleships, 4 fleet carriers, 10 cruisers and corresponding numbers of other vessels being available late in 1944 (assuming Germany then to have been defeated). This would be increased to 6 battleships, 5 fleet carriers, 5 light carriers and 25 cruisers late in 1945. Five infantry divisions might have arrived by April 1945. The air contingent would eventually contain 157 squadrons: 63 R.A.A.F. squadrons including 11 from Europe and the Middle East, 16 R.N.Z.A.F. and 78 R.A.F.

The available records of the discussion at the Prime Ministers' Conference are less explicit than the minutes recorded in Australia of an account given by Admiral Daniel at a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 2nd May. Welcoming him, the Acting Prime Minister said that Admiral Daniel had formerly been Director of Plans at the Admiralty and had recently arrived in Australia to examine, in collaboration with Australian officers, the facilities necessary to enable British naval forces to operate in the Pacific using Australia as their base. His mission was exploratory, without commitment, but involved wide and important issues of British cooperation in the Pacific which were to be discussed at the conference of Prime Ministers in London. Daniel then made a statement which is summarised in the Council's minutes as follows:

(*a*) At the Cairo and Teheran Conferences it was decided, subject to final approval, that the major effort against Japan should be made in the Pacific. One of the matters which arose out of this decision was the question of the transfer of R.N. forces to the Pacific. This has been the subject of discussions between the First Sea Lord and Admiral King, and, at the latter's suggestion, it was decided to send a British Service Mission to the United States and the Pacific to investigate the problems associated with such transfer.

(*b*) There were two strategical conceptions which affected the part to be played by the Royal Navy in the war against Japan:

Firstly—the Indian Ocean strategy. This envisaged landings on Sumatra followed by operations for the recapture of Singapore, involving perhaps 10-12 divisions. If the Royal Navy were committed to such a strategy, the demands would be so great as to make it extremely unlikely for the Royal Navy to be able to do anything in the Pacific.

Secondly—the Pacific Ocean strategy. This envisaged Royal Navy Forces working in close cooperation with United States Forces for an attack in force on the Philippines, Hong Kong, Formosa, and perhaps Japan.

(*c*) The general feeling in Washington was that United States Naval Forces were self-sufficient for the task in the Pacific. United States Naval losses in the operations to date had been light, but they might increase as operations continued, and the United States authorities did not, therefore, exclude the possibility of British assistance in the Pacific. If, however, Britain were committed in the Indian Ocean and operations in Malaya and adjacent areas did not proceed as rapidly as expected, we would not be able to come to the assistance of the United States Forces. In this event, both prongs of the advance would be held up.

(*d*) Admiral Daniel's personal view was that the Pacific strategy was the correct one. Immense operations would be necessary for the defeat of Japan and we could not have too great a preponderance of strength. Royal Navy Forces should be based on Australia and operate through the New Hebrides, Solomons, Admiralty Islands to the Philippines, thus ensuring secure bases along the lines of communication.

(*e*) Until Germany was defeated (the "official" date for which was October 1944), a British Task Force was all that could be made available for the Pacific. After the defeat of Germany, a force of the following order could be made available:

4 to 6 modern battleships
4 fleet carriers
7 light carriers
18 escort carriers
12 large and small cruisers
60 destroyers
100 escort vessels
900 aircraft (carrier-based)
300 aircraft (land-based)
24 submarines
2 amphibious divisions

(*f*) Australia would, in effect, become a "Pearl Harbour" for operations by the British Naval Forces in the Pacific, just as Pearl Harbour was the basis of the advance of the United States fleet in the Pacific. This would involve a considerable expansion of the facilities at Sydney and elsewhere, and his mission was to investigate this problem.

(*g*) The Japanese fleet would give battle when a vital enemy objective was threatened. The Philippines and Formosa might be so regarded by the enemy, in which event a decisive naval action would probably be fought.

(*h*) The Indian Ocean strategy would not be proceeded with if forces were concentrated in the Pacific. A weak naval force would probably be retained in the Indian Ocean.

(*i*) It was important that there should be no delay in making our maximum effort against Japan, as soon as Germany was defeated. Speed was the essence of the matter and everything possible should be done to avoid a long drawn out war against Japan.

The Acting Prime Minister expressed to Rear-Admiral Daniel the thanks of the Council for his informative statement.[9]

This statement gave the Australian Ministers only a discreet glimpse of aspects of "a long and complicated debate" which began on 30th December 1943 immediately after the Cairo conference and "was to end only in September 1944, after involving the Prime Minister and the

[9] Advisory War Council Minute 1352, 2 May 1944.

British Chiefs of Staff in perhaps their most serious disagreement of the war".[1]

The debate had been set in train when, after Cairo, the British Chiefs of Staff drafted a telegram to the Governments of Australia and New Zealand disclosing their plans for large-scale participation side by side with the Americans in the war in the Pacific. Churchill found himself "immediately in disagreement", preferring to "advance eastwards to the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch islands, using India as our base".[2] The Australian Ministers seemed, at the time, to have learnt no more about this debate and the various compromise solutions that were proposed than Admiral Daniel told them at this meeting and Churchill had revealed in his telegram of 11th March.[3]

There is no record that Curtin was promptly informed of the statements made in Australia, but it is reasonable to assume that he had himself become possessed of this information. In London he continued to give main attention to the decisions already made for an adjustment of the Australian war effort and appeared to be concerned with the decisions on strategy chiefly in their relationship to the demand on Australian manpower.

On 17th May Curtin, in a memorandum to Churchill, said that Australia did not possess the manpower and material needed to meet all the demands being made on her. He mentioned that at October 1943 United States demands were involving the employment of 75,000 Australians and the number was expected to reach 100,000 by June 1944. Australia could only maintain additional forces by adjusting her war effort in some other direction and he put forward an assumption that "if strategical considerations indicated that additional forces should be sent to Australia, the resources of the United Nations would be capable of making good deficiencies which could not be supplied by the Commonwealth". The initial step in the whole matter should be a decision by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in the realm of higher strategy as to whether these additional forces were ultimately to be sent to the Pacific.

Finally he suggested:

> It is highly desirable to obtain a decision by the Combined Chiefs of Staff as to whether additional forces are ultimately to be sent to the Pacific, in order that the Australian Government may proceed with the measures necessary for supply and maintenance. If such a decision is not possible, the Combined Chiefs of Staff should express a general view on the desirability of Australia proceeding with these measures, in view of the fact that the resources can be absorbed in other directions in the war effort of the United Nations. A precise assessment of what Australia is capable of doing can then be worked out and communicated to the United Kingdom

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[1] J. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol V, p. 425.

[2] Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol V, pp. 504-5. "In this," Churchill added (p. 506), "I was fully supported by the Foreign Office, who thought that the British role in the Far East should not be a mere minor contribution to the Americans; this was not likely to appeal to the British people. Moreover, the peoples of Asia were little interested in the Pacific Islands as compared with the wide regions which meant most to them. In contrast, the strategy advocated by South-East Asia Command would have immediate psychological and political effects which would hasten the defeat of Japan."

[3] The discussions are described in detail in Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol V, pp. 421-524.

Government. The decision as to the nature and extent of its war effort is, of course, a matter for the Australian Government.

On 22nd May the British Chiefs of Staff agreed with Blamey that the British reconnaissance parties to go to Australia should be integrated with the Australian staffs and not operate as an independent mission, and Curtin approved this arrangement.

At the Prime Ministers' Conference the British Minister for Labour and National Service, Ernest Bevin, had opened a discussion of post-war employment plans and manpower problems after the defeat of Germany, subjects not included in the original agenda cabled to Australia. Bevin said that Britain had been compelled to put a large army into the field against Germany but that the prosecution of the war against Japan would call for a predominance of naval and air forces. The British Government had decided not to use the term demobilisation during the continuance of the war against Japan but was proceeding on the basis that a reallocation of manpower between the forces and industry would take place. It was important that this idea should be fostered to avoid possible discontent among members of the forces who would be in the Far East. The Government had carried a bill through Parliament giving all men and women in the services a right to reinstatement in their civilian employment even where an employer had found it necessary to engage a substitute during the transition period. In the interim period before the defeat of Japan the *National Service Act* would remain in force and men would continue to be called up. At the same time men would be released according to a system which took into account length of service and age; and there would be limited provision for the release of men needed for urgent reconstruction work.

The Minister for Production, Oliver Lyttelton, said that the Government had for four or five months been studying the requirements for the continuation of the war against Japan, including the size of the forces that could be deployed, the special weapons required, and the quantity of munitions they could rely on receiving from overseas.

The Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, said that Canada was working on similar lines.

Curtin said that Australia could not look forward to making such plans for some time. All her efforts were still directed to prosecuting the war in the Pacific. His Government had been trying to solve the problem that had arisen as a result of the conflicting demands of the Australian forces for replenishment, of the Americans forces for supplies and the United Kingdom for agricultural products. They had been forced to contemplate a reallocation of its manpower not because of the existence of any transition period but because of the dictates of the war situation by which Australia was faced. They found it very difficult to make decisions in the absence of firm estimates of the demands they were likely to be called on to fulfil and of the fighting forces they would be expected to maintain in the field. He recalled that these questions had

been raised in a telegram sent to Mr Churchill in October last to which a reply was still awaited. Since then the position had been further complicated by the receipt of further requests—for example, by one for the manning by Australia of more ships of the Royal Navy.

The situation was an unhappy one, Curtin added, and it was hoped that it would be possible to let Australia soon have an indication of the fighting forces she would be expected to maintain and the supply and maintenance facilities she would be expected to supply for other forces. The continued supply of agricultural products to the United Kingdom was dependent on the answers to these questions. He said that Bevin's proposals gave the impression that the United Kingdom contemplated a long transition period and a small military, but large naval and air contribution to the war against Japan. The suggestion that men who had served for long periods should be replaced by fresh recruits would in his opinion involve further delay in the impact against the Japanese enemy.

Bevin replied that it would be physically impracticable to ship an army of 3,000,000 to the Far East and wasteful to retain them all in the services. The United Kingdom's plans for the transitional period were designed primarily to make use of the surplus manpower available.[4]

At a further discussion with Churchill, Curtin reached an agreement on the way in which Australia's war effort might be apportioned. In fairness to the Americans, in whose sphere of strategic responsibility Australia operated, he felt it was necessary that he discuss the matter in Washington, and, on his return, with MacArthur before submitting the question to the Australian Government.[5] Finally, this phase of his mission abroad reached its culmination in Washington on 2nd June, when he discussed the Australian war effort with the Combined Chiefs of Staff and received the following statement:

> We have been instructed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to convey to Mr Curtin their acceptance of the paper put forward by him containing the basis of policy that he suggests should be followed by the Australian Government with a view to the most effective prosecution of the war, and to request Mr Curtin to proceed on the suggested basis of a reduction to six divisions and two armoured brigades.
>
> The Combined Chiefs of Staff invite Mr Curtin to inform them as to the alternative uses to which the Australian Government considers the manpower released by this reduction could best be applied.[6]

Curtin's first engagement after his arrival at Brisbane from London on 26th June 1944 was a conference with MacArthur. At a meeting of the Advisory War Council on the afternoon of his arrival in Canberra on 29th June he informed members that Australia's service commitments were to be limited to six divisions, plus naval and air forces. On his instructions recommendations were immediately prepared for a further

[4] Message No. 32, Curtin to Forde, 19 May 1944 received 21 May 1944 (included in messages presented to the Advisory War Council as Agendum 16/1944).

[5] See Message No. 44, Curtin (in London) to Forde, 29 May received 30 May.

[6] This and the preceding account are from War Cabinet Agendum 342/1944, 4 Jul 1944, which was presented under his name.

review of the Australian war effort in accordance with this objective.[7] He proposed that immediate studies be made by the Defence Committee, Production Executive and War Commitments Committee regarding the present strength of the three services and the personnel required to maintain the Australian Military Forces at the reduced establishment of six divisions and two armoured brigades for active operations; to maintain the navy at present strength, plus additions arising from the Australian naval construction programme; and to maintain the R.A.A.F. at the strength of 53 squadrons to be achieved under the existing programme by the end of 1944. In the final outcome Production Executive would consider the allocation of manpower

to maintain the needs of the Australian forces;
to provide an appropriate contribution to the needs of the United States forces;
to provide an appropriate contribution to the needs of the United Kingdom forces which may be based on Australia;
to provide for the essential needs of the civilian population on standards appropriate to the present stage of the war, and the civilian standards of the countries whose forces will be supplied from Australian sources;
to provide for the maintenance of food exports to the United Kingdom at the level agreed upon (i.e. on the scale previously agreed upon for 1944);
to provide for the production of such goods as may otherwise be provided for export.[8]

At the same time Curtin repeated to Churchill the case which he had urged in London for a greater British contribution of both land and sea forces to the war in the Far East.

After hearing General MacArthur's strategical plan (he said in a cablegram to Churchill), and his timetable for the conduct of his campaign in the South-West Pacific Area, I would, without wishing to appear importunate in the matter, like to reiterate what I said in London about the time factor being the governing consideration in relation to the United Kingdom contribution. As British land and air forces will not become available for some time, I have reached the conclusion that the best manner of ensuring the earliest and most effective association of British forces with those of the United States and Australia in the war against Japan would be to assign to the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area, the naval forces becoming available this year.

General MacArthur's operations are gaining pace, and it is well within the realm of possibility that his recapture of the major portion of those territories within the area comprising New Guinea, the Philippines, Borneo and the Netherlands East Indies may be effected before the end of 1945. Thus his campaign might well be far advanced towards accomplishment before the complete defeat of Germany releases appreciable outside forces for employment here.

General MacArthur's next major move is projected for early September which will lead to the opening of the Philippine campaign in October. Following the partial occupation of the Philippines, he contemplates an attack upon Borneo and the Netherlands East Indies from north to south thus effecting the recapture by envelopment rather than by frontal assault from the south. General MacArthur believes his air and ground forces are adequate, his weakness lying only in his naval strength.

This presents an ideal opportunity for the employment of the British Naval Task

[7] Advisory War Council Minute 1395, 29 Jun 1944; and War Cabinet Agendum 342/1944.
[8] War Cabinet Agendum 342/1944.

Force. It not only would contribute in great measure to the acceleration of the operations, but would be the naval spearhead in a large portion of this campaign. It is the only effective means for placing the Union Jack in the Pacific alongside the Australian and American flags. It would evoke great public enthusiasm in Australia and would contribute greatly to the restoration of Empire prestige in the Far East. The opportunity that presents itself is very real, but the pace of events here demands immediate action. It is understood there would be no difficulty in basing this force on Australia and, if this suggestion is approved, the forces should be made available at the earliest possible date.

I realise that alternative strategical views to that of basing United Kingdom forces in Australia have to be considered. However, Britain's war record in relation to her resources is so magnificent that it will bear favourable comparison with any other nation, even if circumstances and the speed of the American programme preclude her making an early contribution of land and air forces to the war against Japan. For that reason, I feel that the importance of a timely naval contribution is worthy of your earnest consideration.[9]

While Curtin was promoting the idea of a British force, based on Australia, taking an active part in the offensive against Japan, his own policy for a reduction of Australian operational forces was unchanged and his dominant concern at home still appears to have been with the growing demands on manpower—demands which would certainly grow if a British fleet were supplied from Australia.

In February War Cabinet had called for another "general review of the war effort in the light of the present strategical situation".[1] The resulting report by the Defence Committee on 25th March expressed the opinion that Australia was well past any reasonable risk of invasion or serious attack. Measures necessary for the defence of Darwin and Fremantle should be maintained; offensive action by enemy submarines against shipping and all parts of the coast of the mainland was possible; the chances of any landing or attack by surface forces on the east coast might be discounted and there was no danger of any air bombing on this coast; the chances of an enemy landing on the west coast were remote; the mainland area north of 20 degrees was the most vulnerable area.

Each of the Chiefs of Staff had then made his bid. The Navy said that Australia's best and simplest contribution to the Allied offensive as the war moved farther into the Pacific and away from the Australian mainland would be an increase in naval strength. Great Britain had put a number of warships out of commission because crews could not be provided for them. Let Australia undertake to man them and thus obtain a squadron of three cruisers and a flotilla of modern destroyers. The Army pressed its claim for the means to maintain a striking force for offensive operations —described as "a Jungle Corps of three Divisions, Corps and Army troops, including an Armoured Brigade"; sufficient forces to hold the areas seized; essential garrisons on the mainland and New Guinea; and the fixed defence, lines of communication and administrative units for the maintenance of these forces. The Air Force found it unreal to differentiate

[9] Telegram Johcu 78 to Churchill 4 Jul 1944 in Advisory War Council file "Strategy for War Against Japan—Global Strategy."

[1] War Cabinet Minute 3334, 22 Feb 1944.

between forces required for defensive and offensive operations, admitted that the extent to which the R.A.A.F. would contribute to future offensives would be governed to some extent by the strength and nature of the Allied Air Forces available and asked for the application of the plan for 53 R.A.A.F. squadrons in the South-West Pacific which War Cabinet had approved on 24th November 1943.[2]

In the Advisory War Council the non-governmental members were in favour of the Navy suggestion but War Cabinet was cautious. For the time being no basic change in planning for the services was made, the argument about manpower continued, some adjustments were made in the allocation of the monthly intake between the services, and it was decided to seek the return to Australia of some 3,000 R.A.N. personnel serving overseas, mostly with the Eastern Fleet in the Indian Ocean.[3]

During April, May and June the manpower discussions continued as recounted earlier. The Defence Committee's recommendations for a review of the war effort were eventually approved, three months after they had been made, and various studies proceeded.[4] Any hope they may have had for a change in the role of the services was dashed when their report on the requirements of the three services reached Curtin. After discussion with Blamey, the Minister for Air and the Chief of the Air Staff, during which he insisted on releases, Curtin returned the report with a minute expressing disappointment and directing the committee to make a further review immediately to bring about a reduction of 30,000 men in the strength of the Australian Military Forces and a reduction of 15,000 men in the strength of the R.A.A.F., the target being to release 20,000 men by 31st December 1944, and 25,000 by 30th June 1945. These reductions were to be in addition to discharges for normal wastage. The existing restrictions on the release of nominated personnel for the dairying industry were to be reviewed and proposals in respect to further releases from each of the three services submitted. Blamey was reminded that when in London with Curtin he had given advice that the reduction of the A.M.F. to six divisions would release some 90,000 men.[5] The monthly intake of men for the three services was to remain at a total of 3,000.

The application of this order, so the Defence Committee reported a fortnight later, would mean further reductions of anti-aircraft and coast defences, reduction of Central Australian Lines of Communication, limiting the extent to which the Army was maintaining other services and civilians in Australia, and exhausting the pool of reinforcements. By these economies in manpower a force of six divisions and two armoured brigades could be maintained for active operations until June 1945, but after that date

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[2] War Cabinet Minute 3180, Agendum 457/1943.

[3] Advisory War Council Minutes 1322 of 21 Mar 1944, 1344 of 20 Apr and 1357 of 2 May; War Cabinet Minute 3523 of 3 May.

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1403 and War Cabinet Minute 3655 of 5 Jul 1944.

[5] The War Commitments Committee had reported that demands by high priority industries for the six months ending December 1944 were 78,662 persons and resources were at least 39,000 short of this figure. War Cabinet Agendum 342/1944, Supplement No. 1, 2 Aug 1944; War Cabinet Minute 3691, 4 Aug 1944. Notes of conferences on the Australian War Effort, Melbourne, 2 Aug 1944, between Prime Minister, Service Ministers and General Blamey on Defence Department file 1403/1410.

at least one division would have to be disbanded to rehabilitate the others. The air force, after reorganising and making similar economies in manpower, would comprise approximately 48 squadrons at 30th June 1945. Blamey, supported by the Defence Committee, made out a case for reducing the proposed discharges from the army from 45,000 to 39,000[6] (the figure the War Commitments Committee had estimated as the deficiency in high priority industries' manpower requirements).

After considering this review, War Cabinet gave a direction on 23rd August that the total reduction by 30th June 1945 was to be 45,000 men—30,000 from the A.M.F. and 15,000 from the R.A.A.F., these figures being based on the estimate that the discharges from the services by normal wastage during the same period would be 58,300. The reductions were to include approximately 4,000 personnel nominated for release for the dairying industry. The objective of the services should be to maintain the greatest possible striking forces from the personnel made available to them.[7]

This action was reported to the Advisory War Council for their information and the Country Party members of the Council found another opportunity of referring to the urgent need of releasing more servicemen to work in the dairying industry.[8]

On 12th August Curtin had again urged Churchill, in a personal message, to associate a British naval force with the attack on the Philippines. "I am deeply concerned at the position that would arise in our Far Eastern Empire," he said, "if any considerable American opinion were to hold that America fought a war on principle in the Far East and won it relatively unaided while the other Allies, including ourselves, did very little towards recovering our lost property."[9]

Churchill, in reply to this cablegram and the cablegram of 4th July, forwarded to Curtin on 23rd August the conclusions reached by the United Kingdom Defence Committee and communicated to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington on British strategy for the war against Japan. He pointed out that conditions had altered considerably since the United Kingdom gave the undertaking at Casablanca that, on the defeat of Germany, Britain would assist the United States to the utmost of her power to defeat Japan. The advance of the American forces across the Pacific had been accelerated; the Japanese had strongly reinforced Burma and their strength in that country had risen from four and a half to ten divisions; the likelihood of aggressive action by the Japanese Fleet in the Bay of Bengal was now remote; the Allies now had overwhelming air superiority in the South-East Asia theatre. Britain in protecting communications to China and Yunnan and protecting the frontier of India was committed to a long-drawn-out struggle in the jungles and swamps of Burma, and in the first six months of 1944 her troops there had

[6] War Cabinet Agendum 342/1944, Supplement No. 2, 21 Aug 1944.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 3740, 23 Aug 1944.
[8] Advisory War Council Minute 1410, 7 Sep 1944 and Agendum 17/1944, Supplement No. 1.
[9] Telegram Johcu 81 to Churchill, 12 Aug 1944.

suffered a wastage of 282,000 from sickness and disease and a loss of 40,000 killed, wounded or missing. Mountbatten's plan to capture Rangoon was now about to go before the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington. A strong fleet was being built up by Britain in the Bay of Bengal to operate as early as possible and wherever required against Japan. By mid-1945 it would probably comprise four battleships, six fleet carriers, four light fleet carriers, 15 escort carriers, 20 cruisers, 40 escorts and a considerable fleet train. It would operate under United States command. If, however, the United States Chiefs of Staff were unable to accept support of a British fleet in the main operations, Churchill suggested the alternative arrangement of a British Empire task force under a British commander, consisting of British, Australian and New Zealand land, sea and air forces to operate in the South-West Pacific under MacArthur's supreme command.[1]

There was some disposition in Australia to be annoyed that Churchill should have carried his proposals so far without reference to Australia and in particular there was concern lest the alternative proposal for a British Empire task force might disturb existing arrangements with MacArthur. Curtin, however—perhaps showing one of the consequences of the personal and friendly meeting with Churchill in London—took some care over phrasing his views and was met with comradely reassurance. Any other system than that established for the drawing up of plans by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, without previous reference to the Governments whose forces were included in the plan, would lead to "almost innumerable" people being brought into consultation before any plan could be settled, said Churchill. "The readiness of all Dominion Governments to accept this system had been much appreciated. It has, I am sure you will agree, given to the higher direction of our affairs a coherence which would otherwise have been lacking."[2]

In a message of 11th September Churchill informed Curtin that he was on his way to Quebec to discuss the whole question of the strategy for the war against Japan with the President and the United States Chiefs of Staff. In this case, too, there was a disposition in some quarters in Australia to see an affront, and although Curtin promptly issued a public statement that he was quite satisfied that the views of the Australian Government were being adequately and clearly put in the discussions, Australian newspapers were rife with suggestions that Australia should be there, the name of Dr Evatt figuring prominently as the man to go.[3] From some unknown source Canadian and American newspapers also picked up stories of Australian "dissatisfaction" at exclusion from Quebec. Without prompting from Australia, Churchill asked the Australian High Commissioner in Ottawa to meet him and subsequently, at the request of Curtin[4] arranged for Sir John Lavarack, head of the Australian Military

[1] Telegram Winch 5, 23 Aug 1944.
[2] Telegram Johcu 82, to Churchill, 1 Sep 1944 and Winch 6 from Churchill, 11 Sep 1944.
[3] E.g. *Daily Telegraph*, 14 Sep 1944.
[4] Telegrams Johcu 83, 14 Sep, and 1417 to Washington, 16 Sep.

Mission in the United States also to come to Quebec to keep in touch with the British Chiefs of Staff. When the talks were over Curtin, who in the meantime had received further friendly and informative telegrams from Churchill, but apparently without at once sharing them with his War Cabinet colleagues, issued a statement:

> The British Commonwealth was sharing in the recent discussions at Quebec with President Roosevelt and was represented by its most conspicuous leader, who spoke for the whole British Commonwealth and Empire. The problem at the Quebec conference was the use of British Empire forces in the Pacific war and the total that Australia has in these forces had been decided previously by Mr Churchill, President Roosevelt and myself.

The upshot of the Quebec conference, which Churchill described to Curtin as "a blaze of friendship and unity", was an agreement that the British Fleet would participate in the main operations against Japan, the actual method of its employment to be decided from time to time in accordance with prevailing circumstances, and that the British Empire Air Forces should take their share in the heavy bombardment of Japan. In view of this agreement the suggestion for a British Empire task force under MacArthur did not arise. The offensive in Burma would be launched against Rangoon, if possible, in March 1945.

"For the purposes of planning production and allocation of manpower," said Churchill, "it has been agreed that the end of the Japanese war should be set at eighteen months after the defeat of Germany. This date will be reviewed periodically in the light of developments." He also informed Curtin that the whole problem of the re-deployment of forces after the end of the war in Europe was being earnestly studied in all its aspects.[5]

The results of the conference were regarded as highly satisfactory both for the fuller opportunities they had given for British participation in the Pacific and for the prospect of an earlier victory against Japan. "With the addition of this overwhelming strength to that of the Americans," Curtin cabled to Churchill, "I look forward to the speedy achievement against our Asiatic enemy of the same brilliant and decisive successes as are being gained against Germany. . . . It will be a source of pleasure to you to learn that my War Cabinet and the Advisory War Council who have been given the substance of the broad picture are gratified at all that is involved. Heartiest congratulations and warmest regards."[6]

It is difficult to test the statesmanship of what was done by the Australian Government in 1944 without knowing more clearly what was in Curtin's mind. There are some indications that about the time of the Prime Ministers' conference and afterwards he may not have been sharing all his information and all his thoughts with other Ministers. His own relations with Churchill had greatly improved but his External Affairs Minister, Evatt, was still clamant for a greater share by Australia in the

[5] Telegrams Winch 7, 8 and 9, 18 Sep 1944.
[6] Johcu 85, to Churchill, 21 Sep 1944.

conduct of the war and saw Churchill as the main obstacle to that ambition. In London, Curtin had groped towards closer British Commonwealth cooperation and had personally revived a suggestion for something in the nature of a Commonwealth secretariat, but this excursion seems to have been a surprise to his colleagues back at home and particularly to Evatt.

Curtin's interest in promoting greater British activity in the war against Japan, linked with a wish to ensure that British interest and influence in the region were maintained after the war, would appear to have been fed by his doubts where the themes of internationalism, admiration for the Soviet Union and criticism of British imperialism might lead. Curtin himself does not seem to have had ambitions for Australia to make a name on the world scene. He certainly had his strong doubts about where the growing activities of Evatt might lead in the international sphere and what the effect on the Australian people might be.[7]

It is probable that the mainspring of Curtin's leadership in this phase was a conception of the welfare of the Australian people which was limited to their life at home. His strongest and trusted helper at this time was Chifley, to whom he had confided Post-War Reconstruction, and Chifley was more concerned with the economic aftermath of the war and the problems of managing the Australian economy during and after the war than in participating in debates on strategy. In December 1943 the first outline of the major plans for post-war reconstruction had been given by Chifley and in July 1944, after his return from London, Curtin announced to Parliament the Government's post-war employment objectives, revealing the influence on him of Ernest Bevin's planning in Britain.

Two other elements in the situation almost certainly had an effect on any Cabinet decisions on these issues. In the administrative machine the manpower authorities and sections of the Department of War Organisation of Industry concerned with manpower were much more expert and active than the armed services. The papers they prepared for Cabinet and the supporting documents they furnished were far superior in range and exactness of information, in analysis and in argument to anything that came from the Chiefs of Staff. Their overwhelming expertness was one of the earliest demonstrations of the inevitability of bureaucracy when Governments are called at short notice to deal with a multiplicity of complicated detail. The second element was MacArthur, on whom Curtin appeared to be leaning more and more for military advice. There is scant documentary record in the Australian archives of what advice MacArthur gave to Curtin but his known views would have confirmed the idea that Australia should not seek to play a more active part in operations beyond the South-West Pacific Area.

Having regard to the pressure of the demands on Australia, the War

[7] The author acknowledges that he is unable to escape at this point from the strong impressions left by his personal association, as an officer of the Department of External Affairs, with some of the events and personalities of this period, and from the memory of personal conversations with Curtin (based on a pre-war friendship).

Cabinet decisions were inescapable. The role of supplier was probably the one that Australia was expected by her Allies to fill and there was certainly no reproach from them over the decisions taken. Yet there were those at the time and since who felt that Australia should have sought a more active role in the forthcoming offensives against Japan. Evatt thought so. The military leaders and at least some of the men in the forces thought so. Considering all circumstances, it is doubtful whether in fact they could have done more than the Curtin Government decided they should do. This is one of the points, however, at which it is difficult to judge Curtin for lack of exact knowledge whether in his own mind he had chosen what he thought best or whether he did what he could not avoid doing, although, as indicated at several points earlier in this volume, there is some evidence (for example in his handling of the conscription issue) that he saw desirable limits to Australia's role in the offensive after the Japanese attack had been checked.

5—DEMANDS FROM ALLIED FORCES IN AUSTRALIA AND BEYOND

Throughout 1943 there had been a steady growth in the volume of Reciprocal Lend-Lease. Up to the end of August the recorded Australian expenditure was £78,700,000 and it was probable that the estimate to the end of the year (£84,000,000) would be exceeded. More than half the estimate had been for supplies, including food, camp stores, munitions, wireless and signal stores, engineer stores and ships and the bulk of the remainder for works including the building of camps, hospitals, airfields, fleet accommodation, roads, wharves and electricity services.[8]

Behind the making of these arrangements lay the general problem of balancing the demands of the Australian forces for men and material, the essential needs of the civilian population, the export of certain quantities of food-stuffs to the United Kingdom and the provision of food, general supplies, works and services to the United States forces.

The needs of the United States forces were estimated to involve the employment of about 75,000 civilians at the end of 1943 and the number was expected to rise to 100,000 by June 1944. Of these 13,500 were employed directly by the United States forces as civilian employees.[9] In addition, the supplying of the Americans withdrew from other uses many staple foodstuffs. At the end of 1943 the United States demands from Australia for the South-West Pacific Area and the South Pacific Area were for dairy produce equivalent to 99,000,000 gallons of whole milk, 29,000,000 dozen eggs, 3,150,000 cases of canned fruit, 7,882,000 gallons of fruit and tomato juices and 208,000 tons of meat. By necessity, the allocations made were lower.

The Munitions Department was overwhelmed with orders, and at the

[8] War Cabinet Agendum 471/43, 9 Nov 1943. See Appendix 8, "Machinery for the Coordination of the Requirements of the Australian and United States Forces in the South-West Pacific Area".
[9] Agendum 41/1944.

end of 1943 found itself with American demands totalling over £24,000,000, which at the current rate of deliveries represented about twenty months' production of the particular items required. The main items were refrigeration plant, wireless and signal stores and small marine craft and ship repairs. The department could not possibly meet these commitments and at the same time release 20,000 men as directed by the War Cabinet in October, and the Americans were so informed. The Government had to clamp down on additional demands.[1]

Early in October 1943 the United States Government made a formal request for the extension of Reciprocal Lend-Lease to include raw materials and food-stuffs imported by the United States Government from Australia. Hitherto Australia's liability had been limited to supplies to United States forces in Australia and its territories. A committee of officials who studied the proposal reported to the Treasurer to the effect that acceptance of the proposal need not seriously affect Australia's overseas financial position if certain precautions were taken, but there might be much more serious effects on Australia's internal problems. Yet, the United States request might be granted safely provided certain safeguards were raised, principally to ensure that all demands for reciprocal aid were closely reviewed and their urgency weighed against the effects each would have on other forms of war production and on Australian civilian consumption. The War Cabinet, however, felt that it had reached the limits of its contribution under Reciprocal Lend-Lease arrangements and could not commit itself "to meeting requests for an unspecified series of commodities" which the United States Government might in future seek to bring within the scope of the Reciprocal Lend-Lease Agreement. Without variation of the existing agreement, however, the Government "was prepared to consider from time to time the inclusion of certain specific commodities within the scope of the present arrangements".[2] This decision was maintained in face of further representations both from Washington and London.[3]

In a formal reply to the United States Government, delivered in Washington on 5th November, the Australian Government set out its views as follows:

> The provision of Reciprocal Aid under the present arrangements in conjunction with the requirements of our own forces and other essential commitments is imposing such a heavy strain on our very limited resources that we are already faced with a serious manpower shortage which will be intensified as the Allied Forces based in Australia grow and the demands under the present Reciprocal Lend-Lease Agreement increase. After a full examination of present and prospective commitments the Commonwealth Government feels that these commitments are so great and our manpower position so acute that Australia has reached the practical limits of the contribution it can make by way of reciprocal aid.

The United States Government, in reviewing its request, made it clear

[1] War Cabinet Minute 3288, 21 Jan 1944.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 3114, 19 Oct 1943.
[3] War Cabinet Minute 3141, 4 Nov 1943; and Minute 3271, 21 Jan 1944.

that its proposal related only to exports which were already being shipped to America against cash payment and that no additional drain on Australian manpower was involved. It was asserted that the proposal was a purely financial one. The United States would make separate requests in respect to each commodity required and in each case the final decision whether or not to supply it as reciprocal aid would rest with the Australian Government. The Australian documents do not clearly reveal why Australian suspicion of the proposal remained, but two additional factors which they do disclose are the fact that, while seeking this extension of reciprocal aid from Australia, the United States was excluding from its own Lend-Lease aid such articles of civilian use as tobacco, and the belief held in some quarters in Australia that the United States, looking ahead to post-war commerce, was trying to limit the amount of dollar balances held by British Empire countries in the United States. Allied with this there may have been some nervousness lest this system of handing over goods in return for a book entry might be extended further and further. Overseas balances were the supreme good in Australian financial policy.

The decisions of October 1943 for a readjustment of the war effort had included a decision that there were definite limits to the acceptance of Lend-Lease commitments by Australia and hence a choice would have to be made between various American demands. Subsequently the Treasury reached the opinion that under existing administrative arrangements it was impossible to carry out the decision and that a central authority should be created to receive United States requests, instead of allowing them to go direct to the Australian supplying department. American demands were likely to increase and unless they were coordinated with other demands and considered in relation to the whole Australian economy the situation might become chaotic. Accordingly the Treasurer recommended to the War Cabinet on 11th February 1944 that a central authority for reciprocal aid be set up and that it should function under the control of Production Executive, the chairman of which was also a presiding Minister of the War Commitments Committee.[4]

The Department of Supply and Shipping, however, regarded such proposals as "involving an interference with the administrative discretion of the department and the responsibility of the Minister" and strongly opposed them. Their point of view was based on the simple tenet that Australia should supply all demands "to the limit of our capacity". "Broadly speaking," the departmental statement said, "the departments concerned are the best judges; they have a practical day-to-day knowledge of the production of the industries with which they are concerned, including capacity, manpower and materials. This is a specialised knowledge in these particular fields which other departments or bodies cannot be expected to possess, and enables the particular department to arrange for the turning out of supplies to the best of advantage and with the

[4] War Cabinet Agendum 75/1944.

minimum waste. No general survey can form an efficient substitute. To attempt to set up a body above the production departments to determine such matters would not work."

The dispute was taken to the Full Cabinet on 4th April where its discussion was mingled with other matters, and the decision was to appoint a committee which would be presided over by the Minister for Trade and Customs and consist of two representatives of each of the Departments of the Treasury, Supply and Shipping, Munitions, Labour and National Service, War Organisation of Industry and Aircraft Production and the Controller-General of Food, "to consider all matters relating to Reciprocal Lend-Lease Administration and the manpower implications involved".[5] This committee's report, in three sections, dealt with a central authority for Reciprocal Lend-Lease; the problem of manpower transfers to meet the munitions depression; and resumption of exports by the Commonwealth. On the first the recommendation was for a "Reciprocal Aid Committee representing Treasury, Manpower, War Organisation of Industry and the department concerned in the particular item of supply under consideration".[6] The Cabinet "approved the need to establish a central control for the purpose of examination and deciding all major demands (except works projects and munition items dealt with by the Defence Committee) made by United States forces" but rejected the proposed committee and decided the central control should for the time being be vested in the Treasurer.[7] Subsequent reports on Reciprocal Lend-Lease, therefore, came to the War Cabinet over the name of a Treasury official as "Director, Reciprocal Lend-Lease Finance".[8]

Prolonged negotiations were also conducted to try to bring some modification in American demands through an adjustment of American ration scales.[9] This matter was eventually referred to the Production Executive of Cabinet for consideration in connection with its extensive report on the capacity of the Australian war effort to maintain Australian, United States and possible United Kingdom forces, to supply civilian needs, and to supply agreed exports to the United Kingdom and India plus any other exports. The United States forces' ration was not mentioned specifically but on requirements for United States forces the decision covered reduction in such items as steel sheets, flywire gauze and timber, and the Food Executive was to give "special attention to the need to relieve strain on Australian manpower by arranging for United States forces to ship direct to forward areas larger supplies of canned and other processed food from the United States of America".[1]

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[5] Full Cabinet Agendum 633; War Cabinet Agendum 75/1944 and Supplement No. 1.

[6] Full Cabinet Agendum 633A, 4 May 1944.

[7] Full Cabinet meeting of 10 May 1944.

[8] W. E. Dunk. See for example War Cabinet Agendum 407/1945, Minute 4460, 4 Oct 1945.

[9] War Cabinet Agenda 87/1944, 336/1944, 391/1944.

[1] War Cabinet Agendum 473/1944 contained the recommendations of Production Executive and the War Commitments Committee on the matters referred to them by War Cabinet Minute 3655, 5th July 1944. Agendum 473/1944 was considered by the Advisory War Council on 19th October 1944 after being considered by War Cabinet on 27th September. See War Cabinet Minute 3858 of 19th October for final decision confirming Advisory War Council recommendations.

A further report on food requirements in the light of these decisions was prepared by the

Alongside the problem of screening the American demands for reciprocal aid, certain problems had arisen in meeting Australian commitments to countries of the Eastern Group Supply Council. A recent mission from the Eastern Group Supply Council had directed attention both to the urgent need of India for certain supplies from Australia, principally railway equipment, and to the fact that India was the only source of supply for Australia of jute, mica, linseed, shellac and strychnine, while she was also a useful source of textiles and cotton yarn. The regrettable fact, however, was that Australia had not lived up to her commitments. In a frank submission to the War Cabinet by the Ministers for Munitions and Aircraft Production and the Acting Minister for Supply and Shipping, dated 18th February 1944, reference was made to the great embarrassment that had been caused by Australia in summarily cancelling orders, diverting them to other purposes or prohibiting export. Instances could be quoted where units in Eastern Group operations had been immobilised in whole or in part because of Australia's failure to honour her contracts and that if in future Australia did not stand up to her obligations the success of operations might be jeopardised. Australian prestige had been impaired and the situation could only be repaired if there was a clear understanding on the part of all concerned that once an order was accepted the goods would be delivered. The Ministerial submission also directed attention to the difficulty which had been caused by the fact that, for some time past, part of the Eastern Group programmes had been screened by the Allied Supply Council and, to quote the incomparable prose of officialdom, "there has been a tendency on the part of the United States representatives to be more forceful in the direction of enunciating principles as to the avenues in which our productive capacity should be dispersed". The three Ministers suggested the appointment of a Cabinet Sub-Committee to determine "the disposition of export capacity generally, with the exception of those groups subject to assignment and also food-stuffs which are allocated in consultation with the Combined Food Board". The eventual decision taken by the Full Cabinet was to refer these matters, too, to the interdepartmental committee presided over by the Minister for Trade and Customs.[2] The matter was considered in association with another agendum[3] "Australian Export Trade—Wartime and Post-War Policy" and the Cabinet decided that the committee which had been recommended for Reciprocal Lend-Lease, but which it had rejected, would be suitable to decide on acceptance of export orders.[4]

Controller-General of Food, J. F. Murphy, but did not go to the War Cabinet. It was discussed by an inter-departmental committee (which produced its comments as Production Executive Agendum 39/1945) and it went to the Production Executive as part of more up-to-date information in Production Executive Agendum 63/1945 provided by the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture. In the process the Food Executive had authorised advices to the United Kingdom Government and the Combined Food Board, Washington, so that Ministerial approval of any necessary action was not lacking. The intervening period, moreover, was one of major changes in the military situation, and the question of ration scales for the United States services became relatively unimportant.

[2] War Cabinet Agendum 77/1944; Minute 3384, 20 Mar, and 3567, 23 May; Full Cabinet Agendum 633A, Part III.

[3] Full Cabinet Agendum 656.

[4] Full Cabinet decision 10 May on Part III of 633A.

In operation, the committee consisting of Treasury, Manpower, War Organisation of Industry and the department concerned with the particular item (Post-War Reconstruction and Commerce and Agriculture were added later[5]) and which became known as the Export Committee, obtained Cabinet approval for a procedure by which all departments would send details of every overseas inquiry or order to the secretary of the committee, who would transmit information to members, obtain a report and recommendation for the department responsible for supply and submit this recommendation to the committee. Mixed programmes would be referred to the Department of Supply and Shipping to carry out the necessary sorting and coordination, obtain the necessary information from interested departments and forward recommendations for consideration by the committee.

While adopting these measures for the handling of exports the War Cabinet reaffirmed its earlier decision[6] about principles and directed the Export Committee to have regard to them: "The primary consideration in every proposal is whether it makes the maximum contribution to the Australian war effort in the South-West Pacific Area, except where it can be justified as a contribution which can be peculiarly made by Australia to the efforts of the United Nations in another theatre, for example, the supply of foodstuffs to Britain."[7]

The working out of these arrangements had been accompanied by a good deal of tugging and pushing by interested departments and at times it might have seemed that who should handle a question was more important than how it should be handled. As the year passed by, two new demands on Australian supplies arose: one from the Netherlands East Indies (submitted through MacArthur and the Allied Supply Council) for supplies for the rehabilitation of reoccupied areas or those about to be reoccupied, and the other in respect of U.N.R.R.A. (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration).[8]

[5] War Cabinet Minute 3684, 22 Jul.

[6] War Cabinet Minute 2968. (It had been used verbatim in Curtin's policy speech of 26th July 1943—*Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 62.)

[7] War Cabinet Minute 3684, 22 Jul 1944 and Agendum 365/1944.

[8] Agendum 415/1944 and Agendum 695/1944.

CHAPTER 8

THE FORWARD VIEW

1—INTRODUCTORY

DURING 1944 and 1945 the term "post-war reconstruction", which had been in formal official use since the end of 1942, became part of the common currency of Australian political life. Month by month a larger part of the decisions of Cabinet, the debates of Parliament and the business of public administration was concerned with this topic. As the conduct of the war became duller the thought of what was going to happen after the war became livelier in the mind of the politician, the public servant and the community, either by way of hope or of doubt. A new procession was being formed leading to a higher goal than victory.

Several elements were working together to give shape to Australian thought and action for the post-war world. Since the first days of the war many of those who customarily worked to impress their views on others had taken up this theme. Clergymen, persons in academic posts, public commentators on the wireless or in print, educationists, and adherents of various groups and societies devoted to public affairs had argued that the war would only be worth fighting if it brought changes. Perhaps some of them thought of the war not as a struggle for survival—a resistance to an aggressor—but as a cleansing and liberating force or as a challenge to rebuild better what was certain to be pulled down. Some of them thought chiefly of the world scene and the state of mankind; some of them thought of the unevenness of the spread of material benefits at home. Perhaps some saw the upheaval of war as a time of social and political rearrangement; perhaps others, to whom war was horrid, could only find their patriotic impulses compatible with their past professions if they could convince themselves that the war could be made to bring some good.

Those in authority were aware that in the democracies, which had been mentally as well as militarily unprepared for the war, there was little popular enthusiasm for war and few illusions about its glory. It was too bald a statement that a nation was fighting so that she would not herself be destroyed. Principles as well as territory were being defended against attack. People had to be called to sacrifice for a higher cause than their own survival. So the national leaders gave, by pronouncement to their people, what were called the "war aims". Necessarily these aims included not only defending a principle against military attack but also proposals for establishing that principle more firmly in practice after victory had been won. Throughout hostilities "war aims" were kept before the people on the home front by the information services of the Allied governments.

The statement of war aims led in time to clearer and more definite pronouncements by Allied leaders or to formal agreements between Allied governments on the action to be taken in respect of particular matters, both to hearten occupied countries and to bring practicality and precision to

the cooperation between allies. Gradually this international discussion and negotiation, followed in some cases by formal commitment, became a very strong formative influence on Australian thinking and planning for the post-war world. Through it Australia shared in the stock of ideas being turned over in the Western democratic countries.

The particular shape given to post-war planning in Australia was also moulded by local conditions and domestic problems. Among the local conditions was the fact that the Labour Party was in power in the Australian Parliament from the end of 1941 onwards. The Labour Party had been accustomed for half a century to think of itself as the progressive party, the one with advanced ideas, the one fighting against "the forces of reaction", the one that had the boldness and the vision to make major reforms, the one that was willing to reorganise society and its institutions to secure greater good for greater numbers. It was a socialist party and it believed that socialism was the coming force in the new world. It was both natural and politically proper that the Labour Party, having that view of itself and being in office, should regard the possession of power as its opportunity. From the election of 1943 onwards it was also natural for it to regard itself as being entitled by the votes of the people to govern on the Labour platform even although its political opponents might argue that it was improper to do so as the 1943 election campaign had been fought mainly on wartime issues. It was over thirty years since the Labour Party had found so good a chance in the Australian Parliament to apply its ideas, for in 1914 its opportunities as a government had been interrupted by the coming of the First World War, and when it next obtained office in 1929 it had almost immediately faced the exceptional problems of the economic depression and two years later had split over the financial measures for dealing with the crisis and had fallen from office. The approach of the party and of some of its leading personalities to post-war problems was that here was the opportunity to do what they had long contemplated as desirable but had never had the chance of doing before. The ball was in their hands at last.

Other elements giving particular shape to Australian post-war planning are to be found in Australia's own political history. Among the topics that thronged the minds of those who had to make plans and of those who had to adopt or reject the plans were these: the political importance of the rural industries; the history in several States of the readjustments carried out in marginal wheat areas; the peace-time problems of marketing primary products; the tardiness of recovery in the building industry right up to the outbreak of war and the customary view that the state of the building industry was a major index of prosperity; the lasting effect of the economic depression of the 1930s, not only in a memory of human suffering through unemployment but in the deep conviction among some economists that the central problem of Australian economic management was the creation of employment opportunities, so that sometimes they tended to think of employment as the target and not as the score that would be

the consequence of hitting the economic target; the problems of providing capital assistance for development; the maintenance of standards of living and the provision of social services for the less privileged members of the community. This was the stuff of politics before the war and it would be the same after the war.

Among other practical problems, plain and unavoidable, was the task of demobilisation. The hundreds of thousands of men and women in uniform would have to be discharged when hostilities ceased. The plainest part of the operation would be the routine task of the assessment of their entitlements in respect of the service they had done or the injury they might have suffered; their transport home and the replacement of a uniform by a civilian suit; the closing of their records as sailors, soldiers and airmen with justice, neatness and promptness. What of their future life as civilians? What of their lost opportunities as civilians? Training, housing and gainful occupations for them called for planning of a more extensive kind on less familiar ground. That planning must also take account of the even larger numbers of persons engaged in those wartime industries that would presumably no longer be economic when the war ended. Was wartime industrial plant to be scrapped or adjusted to new uses?

The impulses generated by war aims, broadly stated, had to be satisfied by measures taken to produce concrete results within the Australian economy and to gain political approval within the Australian community.

Out of the necessity to work on these matters there came yet another influence to shape Australian post-war reconstruction—the planners themselves. In the public service and, on the fringes of the public service, in various agencies created for the purpose, there grew up towards the end of the war a group of persons who might best be described as the planners. They were a group somewhat apart and clearly distinguishable on the one hand from the politicians, caged in Parliament, to whom their plans were fed, and on the other hand from the main body of public servants who tended the administrative garden day by day. The planners were a new phenomenon in Australian government and the administrative arrangements made for post-war reconstruction gave them unusual opportunities. They were a new and devout group who had believed in the planned state and had communed about it when they were only a devout few in the political catacombs, and now the Emperor himself had embraced their religion.

While recognising that those appointed by the government to be engaged solely in post-war planning became a considerable influence, historically it would be a mistake to present the story solely as an account of their successive recommendations, and their place in history can easily be exaggerated if lifted from the context of contemporary events. As praise of them is considered to be inappropriate because the responsibility was not borne by them but by those who accepted or rejected their plans, so would criticism be. By and large, Australian post-war planning was kept practical under the weight of the commonsense of Australian politics.

They had to make a few guesses and some of the guesses were wrong. If the craft of planning makes a merit of crossing your bridges before you come to them it is understandable that sometimes the planner draws maps of rivers that are never found.

Nevertheless it is probable that the historian of the post-war period will find that in the narrative of political, economic and social change after the war—for example in banking, health services, education, Federal-State relationships, housing and the expansion of secondary industry—these wartime activities make a significant early chapter. That chapter will not be written in this volume. Some of the topics mentioned above became matters of political controversy soon after the war ended and there would be limited value in a political record that necessarily stopped before the argument had come to a head. The testing of decisions made for peacetime can only be fairly made in peacetime when the consequential measures have been put into effect and have been seen to succeed or fail. Moreover, the politics of such subjects as housing, education, health services and banking stretch back into the past before hostilities began and into the future after hostilities ceased.

Unless the war is to be considered as a creative and innovating force, what was thought and done after the war will be found to be continuous from what was being thought and done before the war. There is evidence that this was so. Out of wartime experience may have come a greater readiness to remove old impediments, to discard old methods or to adopt new devices of government and, so far as it did this, wartime experience improved the opportunity of doing what had been thought about but never applied. Moreover the destruction of war did leave open spaces, not only in towns but in the habits of the community and the structure of society.

Among wartime experience in the Australian Federation is the centralising of authority. The judicial interpretation of the defence powers of the Commonwealth (Section 51 of the Constitution) means in practice that, with a state of war, the Commonwealth has power over an enormous range of domestic affairs; and judicial interpretation that the facts determine the extent of the operation of the power is matched by a popular acceptance of the idea that when the nation is at war it has to act as a nation and not as six parts of a nation. During the war there were increased governmental direction and control over the life of the citizen; and the great part of this was exercised by central authority. Other wartime experiences were the growth of governmental industrial enterprises or a closer dependence by private industry on governmental arrangements to ensure the making of a profit; a growth in the power of the public servant or of any other authority (board, commissioner or director-general) not immediately answerable to Parliament; and with all this the growth of the idea of planning and directing the economy.

Perhaps, too, less clearly describable because psychological in its effect, there was a growth of the idea of knocking things down if they got in

the way. Australian pioneers had always cleared the land of trees but the limits had been set by the inadequacy of the mattock, axe and tree-puller. A new generation had mightier instruments of destruction and there was the beginning of a legend that the man who gave prompt orders to knock something down was a man who "got things done". The question whether what was done was well done did not come at once into the argument.

Yet, though wartime conditions favoured the transformation of this experience into a habit, it is probable that the historian of post-war events will find that the continuity of history spanned the interruption caused by the war. It is probable that such a historian will find that post-war Australia did not confirm all these wartime tendencies in their entirety but preferred to pick up again some of the old traditional ways or, if unable to do so completely, to resist in peacetime the centralising of authority, governmental control and direction, and the power of the public servant and to oppose the growth of a bureaucracy. After the war there was a resumed tendency towards provincialism and a renewed appeal by State politicians to local loyalties away from a national sense of Australia. The continuance of governmental industries was resisted after the war with the same arguments used to oppose their creation before the war, although private industry continued to nurse the wartime expectation that if the government wanted an industry it was the government's responsibility to ensure that the industry operated at a profit. Perhaps, too, ideas of doing bigger things, knocking down and putting up on a larger scale, also persisted.

From this brief speculation it will be seen that writing of post-war reconstruction in a history of the war is like writing the story of a great river without travelling beyond the mountains where some of the tributary streams have their source. The scope of this chapter is set by the relevance of post-war planning to wartime government and to wartime opinion. Within that limit some information may be recorded of interest to any historian who studies the progress of political events in Australia after the war but the study of post-war events is not being attempted here. The history of post-war reconstruction is necessarily a history of the period after the war and the judgments on the social, economic and political issues raised in the wartime debate on post-war reconstruction cannot be made fairly and intelligently until the planning has been tested in action.

Hence this chapter is an uncompleted study and is written modestly. The purpose here is only to record what happened during the period of the war, its relationship to other wartime events and its effect on the conduct of the war and on the political life of Australia in wartime. The judgments will be tentative and set in the context of the wartime period.

2—THE INTERACTION OF FOREIGN AND HOME AFFAIRS

From early in the war thought and action on post-war questions had come under three influences. First, the practical social, economic and

political tasks waiting to be done at home when hostilities ceased clearly required some planning and preparation in wartime. Second, popular opinion worked on both the hope and the promise of a better world after the war. Third, inter-Allied cooperation and the changing shape of events produced not only declarations of war aims to inspire and encourage all Allied governments and to hearten the occupied lands but also brought into being some of the international machinery and started to lay down some of the conditions in which peace might be made and the post-war world rebuilt.

To an increasing extent these three sets of influences began to act on each other as the war continued and, in particular, the thinking of the government about post-war Australia became more and more closely intertwined with world events.

Of course, Australia, as a trading nation depending on markets overseas, was well aware that her economic progress was inseparable from the economic progress of the rest of the world. The economic depression of the thirties had not started in Australia but overseas. As a belligerent in two world wars, Australia knew that wars also started overseas and, most of the former isolationists in the Labour Party having recognised reality, the government now preached what others had preached at an earlier stage that peace for Australia depended on peace in the world. It might therefore have been expected that Australia would see the necessity for international measures to give her peace and prosperity. Now, however, Australian participation in international discussion of the post-war world and Australian plans about the post-war shape of Australia became parts of a total argument.

At the same time, some domestic planning did proceed in isolation from world influences. Some of the mechanical processes of re-establishment were worked out solely in an Australian setting and even some of the paper work for particular industries was done in seeming disregard of what was happening in the outside world. Yet at the higher policy-making level the evidence is clear that post-war reconstruction in Australia became intertwined with post-war international policies overseas and, looking back on the total experience, it is plain that the chief ideas of social change, the economic theories applied to national affairs and the political judgments on post-war reconstruction were deeply influenced by Australia's participation in world affairs; and, in turn, Australia came to see that its own hopes could only be fully realised through international action.

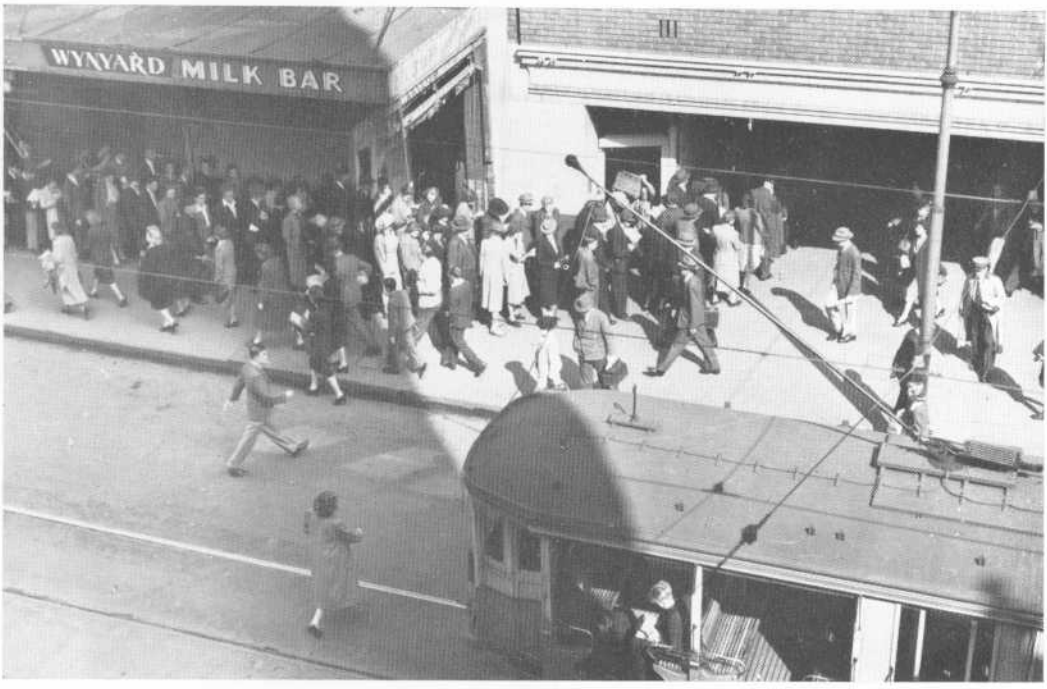
In its origin this trend probably owed something to the professionalism of the economists and political advisers who had been drawn into the service of the government during the war and who brought into higher administrative circles a keener awareness of the world outside; but what they prompted the force of events demanded. Not so much in the waging of war as in preparing for the peace Australia felt the compulsion to be active internationally.

An illustration of this theme can be found in a speech which Curtin



Australian War Memorial

A section of the huge crowd at the Flemington Racecourse for the 1943 Melbourne Cup. Australians could not be denied the thrill of racing even in wartime.



Australian War Memorial

A queue for tobacco and cigarettes at Wynyard Station, Sydney in 1944. Such queues for tobacco and cigarettes, and for other commodities the more earnestly desired sometimes simply because they were scarce, were a familiar sight in cities and towns throughout Australia during the war years and for some time afterwards.



Australian War Memorial

A long queue of people lined up for bottled beer at The George Hotel, St Kilda, Victoria, on 31st December 1943.



Australian War Memorial

Potential holiday makers queue up outside the Victorian Government Tourist Bureau on 30th March 1944 to make their Easter bookings. Interstate travel by train was controlled by a system of permits, or "priorities", but it was possible for a young woman seeking to join her soldier husband in another state to reach the border by train and then cross it by other means.



Australian War Memorial

A Sydney street on a Sunday, five years after the commencement of the war, with near-empty trams and a few scattered civilians and servicemen on leave with no place much to go.



Australian War Memorial

The orators still thundered their impassioned words in the Domain but their audiences were thinner than in peacetime years.

delivered to the "Sixteenth Commonwealth Conference" of the Australian Labour Party held in Canberra from 14th December 1943.[1]

In the first part of his speech he reviewed the events of the war and spoke of the interdependence of the Allies. Each had to contribute all it could. Australia would have been "done for but for the fact that the principle of mutuality was accepted by others". In the second part of his speech he spoke of the new world that was being created. The United Nations had declared that it would be a better world.

These declarations mark new milestones along the road of human progress and confer new charters on the rights of man. The four essential human freedoms defined by President Roosevelt, and the common principles of national policies as outlined in the Atlantic Charter, are comparable in their significance to Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. Freedom of speech and worship, freedom from want and fear, are the minimum conditions under which man can attain his best self as an individual, as a citizen of a nation, and as an inhabitant of a world society.

The principles of the Atlantic Charter, on which the hopes for a new international order are based, are a pledge that national policies will be directed to the betterment of mankind, and the creation of a permanent system of general security. These principles of humanity must not remain mere words of encouragement to the war efforts of the people of the United Nations. They must be translated, now, into plans for the day when Australia shall be called upon to implement them. It would be calamitous to be as unprepared for peace as we were for war. The foundations of the new order, both national and international, must be built while the spirits of the peoples of the United Nations are still at those heights of nobility, comradeship and understanding to which their common ordeals and sacrifices have raised them.

Governments in their national and domestic spheres can individually achieve some degree of progress towards the aims of a new world order but their full realisation is attainable only by international cooperation.

In these words the Prime Minister clearly accepted for Australia an obligation to apply the Allied declarations both through international cooperation and by national policies at home. He went on to speak of the British Empire as an example of successful cooperation in serving a common policy and foreshadowed the emergence of "the fourth Empire" and suggested some conditions to govern consultations among its members and the machinery of an imperial secretariat, periodical meetings of Prime Ministers, meetings, as required, of Ministers engaged on particular questions, and direct communication between governments. He reviewed also the history of the League of Nations. In the light of these two great experiments what was the direction in which Australia should go for the establishment of a new world order on the foundation of the Allied declarations?

The method by which the ultimate best machinery for international cooperation is to be achieved is by an evolution similar to that which has been the history of cooperation in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The nucleus of the machinery must be the Great Powers of Britain, America, Russia and China, in association with all other peace-loving nations. The "Big Four" will also have the monopoly of armed strength which must be used as a trust for all mankind until an effective collective system is established.

[1] See *Official Report of Proceedings of the 16th Commonwealth Conference*, pp. 47-55.

Curtin concluded by referring to the need for regional agreements to "underpin" the world system and he spoke of the primary interest of Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific region, of the problems of which they could speak "with authority".

The conference, on Curtin's motion, agreed to a resolution saying that Australia should continue to collaborate with other peace-loving nations to establish a peace according to the principles of the Atlantic Charter.

At the earlier Special Federal Labour Conferences held in Melbourne in November 1942 and January 1943 the party had agreed to two wider resolutions on post-war reconstruction, one dealing with international and the other with national policies. The international resolution, basing itself on the fifth principle of the Atlantic Charter, had given emphasis to the raising of living standards in all lands, improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security. The national resolution had urged the appointment in the Australian Government of a Minister whose sole duty would be to prepare a comprehensive scheme of post-war reconstruction.

Before the "Commonwealth" Conference of the Australian Labour Party, Evatt, in a statement to Parliament on foreign policy on 14th October 1943, had also spoken of the hope that wartime cooperation would lead to post-war cooperation among the Allies. The broad objective of Australian foreign policy, he said, was to obtain world conditions in which peace, national development and prosperity could be secured for the Australian people in accordance with their ideals of the democratic way of life. He also recognised that this would be impossible of achievement without collaboration with other peace-loving nations so that "all the men in all the lands shall live out their lives in freedom from fear and want". He, too, emphasised that Australia could not safely limit her interests to one region. "We cannot contract out of Europe" for peace, order and good government in Europe were vital to Australia. Australia had a real concern in the ultimate European settlement. Moreover, Australia should do its utmost to see that the principles of the Atlantic Charter were "translated into actuality" in Europe so as to make certain they were also applied in the Pacific. Later in the same speech he referred to the attention being given by the Government, in working out its own policies, to the results of international discussion of food and agriculture, international monetary problems in their relationship to trade, civil aviation and the organisation of relief and rehabilitation.

The present reference to this speech is made as a further illustration of the way in which Australian governmental thinking on policy hinged on international discussion of the post-war world. With this there came, both in the Ministerial speeches and in the resolution of the Labour Party conference, an insistence that participation in such international measures of cooperation "should be subject to the sovereign control of the policy of Australia by its own people, Parliament and Government". (Curtin's motion to the December 1943 conference.)

The international developments of which Curtin's speech of December 1943 had taken notice had been cumulative from the outbreak of war.

It is now proposed to trace in some detail the main events which precipitated the policy which he crystallised in his speech of December 1943, and then to examine the ways in which that policy was applied.

The first of the international declarations in which Australia joined was that made on 12th June 1941, at a conference in London of representatives of the United Kingdom, Dominion and Allied Governments. By resolution at the meeting, one of the two essential conditions of peace was stated to be "the willing cooperation of free peoples in a world in which, relieved of the menace of aggression, all may enjoy economic and social security", and the participating governments declared their intention to work together with other free peoples both in war and peace to this end.

In August 1941 Roosevelt and Churchill made the declaration which became known as the Atlantic Charter and a further conference of Allied Governments in London on 24th September expressed its adherence to "the common principles of policy" set forth in this declaration. In an accompanying resolution Australia joined with the others in a promise to collaborate in preparations for meeting the post-war needs of countries liberated from Nazi oppression.

The principles of the Atlantic Charter were also endorsed by the International Labour Conference in New York in October-November 1941, at which Australia was represented.

Following the entry of Japan into the war and the enlarging of the Allied ranks more formal adherence to the principles was given in Washington on 1st January 1942, when twenty-six Allied States, including Australia, signed what was at first known as a "Declaration of Allied Solidarity" but was later called the "United Nations Declaration". Australia joined with others in subscribing "to the common programme of purposes and principles embodied in the joint declaration . . . known as the Atlantic Charter".

The resolution of the International Labour Conference of November 1941 was influential in Australia, which had traditionally been closely attached to the I.L.O. and, perhaps because of the value which she had placed on improved labour conditions in her own national life and the experience in this field which she had accumulated, had customarily taken part in its affairs with greater confidence and activity than she had done in most other international bodies. The I.L.O., which had transferred to Montreal from Geneva, was one of the few organs of the League still functioning and it became one of the early instruments for international post-war preparations. The resolutions of its New York conference stressed the need for immediate economic reconstruction measures as soon as hostilities ceased and hence the need for preparations while the war was still being waged. Among other things it suggested to the Governments of member states that, if they had not already done so, they should set up "representative agencies for the study of the social and economic needs of the post-war world" and that such agencies should consult with the appropriate organs of the I.L.O. A further resolution opened thus: "The

Conference insists that, after having made sure of victory, the most important tasks for the democracies will be to establish the principles of economic cooperation which should be laid down between all the nations of the world. . . ." It urged that a start should be made immediately with "the study of the economic conditions which will make social progress possible".

The tripartite character of delegations to International Labour Conferences meant that the lessons of this meeting were not only communicated to the Government but were carried back into the Australian community by representatives of employers and employees. In the political circumstances in Australia following the change of government in October 1941 the value of this fact was that, right into the heart of the Labour movement, the employees' representative, Mr Albert Monk,[2] carried the international gospel.

Another strong influence was that of the United States. The "Four Freedoms" speech by Roosevelt in his annual message to Congress on 6th January 1941 had found a response in many lands: "In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms." Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear became a text in the mouths of many Australians.

The inspiring words of a neutral were backed by material support and then, after Pearl Harbour, the neutral became a powerful ally and a nation to which the Curtin Government looked increasingly for leadership.

Throughout 1941, by the use of the *Lend-Lease Act*, approved in March, the support of the United States for the Allies had become more real and, in concert with the influences that led to the Atlantic Charter and to American sponsorship of the I.L.O. resolution, the terms of the lend-lease aid for the Allies also foreshadowed policies for the post-war world. On 23rd February 1942 a Mutual Aid Agreement was concluded between the United States and Britain. In announcing the terms of the eventual settlement between the nations for war-time aid given and received, Roosevelt said:

> Its purpose shall be not to burden but to improve world-wide economic relations. Its aim will be to provide appropriate national and international measures to expand production, employment, and the exchange and consumption of goods, which, the agreement states, are the material foundations of the liberty and welfare of all peoples, to eliminate all forms of discriminatory treatment in international commerce, and generally, to attain the economic objectives of the Atlantic Charter.
>
> To that end Article VII provides for the early commencement of conversations, within the framework which it outlines, with a view to establishing now the foundations upon which we may create after the war a system of enlarged production, exchange and consumption of goods for the satisfaction of human needs in our country, in the British Commonwealth, and in all countries which are willing to join in this great effort.

This master agreement was open to participation by other nations. Australia did not execute its reciprocal aid agreement with the United

[2] A. E. Monk. President ACTU 1934-43, Secretary 1943-49, Permanent President 1949-69. B. 1900.

States until September 1942, partly because of some hesitation over the commitment in Article VII to take part in conversations to obtain the objective of the elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment in international commerce, and to the reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers—an objective which might not coincide either with the maintenance of Empire preferences or the protection of Australian manufacturing industries.[3]

Nevertheless there was never any uncertainty that Australia would adhere to such a treaty. For one thing it was the only way open to formalise the obtaining of lend-lease war supplies, and to give to Australia its separate identity and a direct relationship with the United States in matters arising from the receiving and giving of reciprocal aid. For another thing Article VII was seen as part of a larger post-war concept. The Atlantic Charter, to which Australia had subscribed, pledged nations to the principle of "access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world" and to "the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labour standards, economic adjustment and social security".

Evatt, in a speech of 25th February 1942, announced the conclusion of the Anglo-American master agreement, gave its text and said of Article VII that it foreshadowed an agreed settlement of the whole subject of post-war trade reconstruction, looked towards increased consumption of goods by the peoples of the world, postulated an attempt to solve the problems of employment and exchange and went some distance to assure the world that the "four freedoms" would not be mere platitudes but "living actualities". Australia was already committed in principle to such collaboration by its adherence to the Atlantic Charter and by the subsequent United Nations Declaration of 1st January 1942. Consequently Australia had "urged upon the United Kingdom Government that an agreement with the United States Government should be concluded".[4]

In the course of further discussion of the Mutual Aid Agreement throughout 1942 the Australian Ministers and advisers concerned with economic policy became more closely aware of the lines of American thinking about the economic problems of the post-war world. During the same period, at the official level, there were discussions in London in October between experts from the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India about related problems, especially some of the monetary problems which were emerging. Roland Wilson attended for Australia.

Meanwhile, in London, as an outcome of the Allied Conference of September 1941, an Inter-Allied Post-War Requirements Bureau commenced planning the practical means of cooperation among the nations to meet the post-war needs of Europe of food, raw materials and articles of prime necessity. This work, with which the Australian Government was associated from the beginning, eventually merged into that of the United

[3] See also Chapter 4, Section 2 of the present volume.
[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 55.

Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. At all stages of the preliminary discussions during 1942 Australia stressed its special interests and responsibilities in the Far East.[5]

A subsidiary but closely related matter arose from the wartime problems of marketing wheat and the prospect that an accumulation of wheat surpluses would result in grave post-war difficulties for producing countries. Australia joined with Argentina, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States in wheat discussions at Washington in April 1942, and with them signed a draft convention. The preamble laid it down that the solution of this problem must be regarded as an essential part of any programme of world economic reconstruction and envisaged international measures for regulation of production and orderly distribution at fair prices but also declared:

> There can be no basic solution of the problem of export surpluses without a general reduction of import barriers, and no measure should be taken or maintained which has the effect of retarding such reduction or of preventing in any way the fullest possible development of international trade.

The need to consider all these and related matters during the course of 1942 had a direct effect on both policy and administrative arrangements for Australian post-war reconstruction. Although there had been earlier consideration of post-war problems, these international events and particularly the Mutual Aid Agreement resulted during the second half of 1941 and throughout 1942 in a growing concentration of interest by the Government's senior economic and external affairs advisers, and eventually by Ministers themselves, on the problems Australia would face in the post-war world.

There were other developments on the political side of which notice had to be taken. While the war was still centred on Europe, Menzies had repeatedly declared its world-wide significance. "This is no battle for the politics of Europe. This is a battle for humanity. . . ."[6] He had spoken frequently of the necessity of a peace settlement that, while dealing with the particular problems of Europe, would lay the foundations of a permanent world peace based on principles of justice and freedom, peaceful settlement of disputes and international outlawry of war.

With the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Germany, the spread of war into the Pacific and the entry of the United States into the global conflict, these ideas gained wider acceptance. The Australian Ministry of External Affairs noted as significant the declaration made on

[5] By June 1943 the preliminary discussions produced the draft of an agreement for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and this was circulated by the United States with the consent of the United Kingdom, Soviet Union and China. After further discussion among the Governments of the United Nations a revised draft was circulated in September. Australia was among the 44 original signatories of this agreement on 9th November 1943. A Council and two regional committees were set up. The Far Eastern Committee consisted of Australia, China, the French Committee of National Liberation, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, United Kingdom and United States. China was chairman and Australia provided the two vice-chairmen. The Committee for Europe replaced the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements.

[6] Address to the National Press Club, Washington, 12 May 1941.

behalf of the Soviet Union at the Conference of Allied Governments in London in September 1941 pointing to such aims as "international cooperation and friendship", "respect for the sovereign rights of peoples", "self-determination of nations", "the right of every nation to the independence and territorial integrity of its country", "collective action against aggressions". It noted in a speech of Stalin in November 1941 the specific disavowal of any aim to impose "our will and our regime upon the Slavonic and other subjugated people of Europe who expect our help" and his declaration: "No intervention of any kind in the internal affairs of other peoples." In the Soviet-Polish Declaration of Friendship, signed in Moscow on 4th December 1941 the Department noted among Soviet war aims "a new organisation of international relations based on an enduring alliance between the democratic countries" and "respect for international law upheld by the collective armed forces of all Allied countries".[7]

Evatt, in a speech on international affairs in Parliament on 3rd September 1942, following his return from an overseas mission, drew particular attention to the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance, concluded on 26th May 1942 and ratified on 4th July. He pointed out that the treaty reaffirmed the Atlantic Charter principles and, after noting that the treaty was directed specifically against Hitlerite Germany, expressed the opinion that the "broader and more important features of the treaty" were the provisions directed to the post-war period. Both parties were bound by the treaty to adopt common action to preserve peace and resist aggression in the post-war period and they had agreed to work together for the organisation of economic prosperity. He had himself discussed the future with Molotov and had told him that Australia regarded the Soviet Union not only as a great European power but as a great Pacific power. It was essential to the future of the Pacific that Australia should always remain on the closest terms of friendship with Russia.

Evatt established the international foundation of post-war planning. "It is becoming more and more clear," he said, "that the military overthrow of our enemies, although our primary aim, will in no way be obstructed but will be assisted if positive plans are now laid as to the course to be pursued in the post-war period." He found a "starting point" in the Allied declarations, especially the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms speech. He went on to establish the further point that the "Atlantic" Charter did not refer only to the region where it was signed; but was universal in its scope and application. "It follows that the future of the regions of the Pacific and of South-East Asia are to be governed by the broad principles of the Atlantic Charter. The system of general security should be as effective in these Pacific and Asiatic regions as in all parts of the world. The Charter also assured to the peoples of South-Eastern Asia and the South-West Pacific that they should be able to live out their lives in freedom from want as well as in freedom from fear, and they could not be excluded from the system of economic collaboration

[7] See *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol 12, No. 7, 1 Jun 1942, devoted wholly to "The Post-War World".

which the United Nations had envisaged. Australia, "as one of the countries of the South-West Pacific", would have a particular interest in closer economic relations with her nearest neighbours. The Japanese notion of a co-prosperity sphere must be replaced by a post-war order that could not be for the sole benefit of one power or group of powers. The age of unfair exploitation was over.

> If the attainment of a higher or a better standard of life for all the Pacific peoples involves any changes in forms of government or administration, either as a means of progress or as a consequence of it, the United Nations must be ready to make the necessary changes. In short, we must found future Pacific policy on the doctrine of trusteeship for the benefit of all the Pacific peoples.[8]

From this time onwards three main themes became apparent in Australian contributions to international discussion of the post-war settlement. One was the right of Australia to participate fully in the peace settlements and with it the assertion of an independent Australian interest. The second was an assertion of the claim for special attention to the Pacific and the Far East. The third was the theme of full employment, secured both by national and international action, chiefly as a means of expanding economic opportunity. It will be convenient to trace first the development of the third theme.

Evatt's speech of 3rd September 1942, it will have been noted, was a speech which drew heavily on the international post-war activities on which his department had been engaged and on his own recent experiences during a mission overseas. It preceded by one month the introduction by Evatt, in his capacity as Attorney-General, of the Constitution Alteration (War Aims and Reconstruction) Bill, 1942. This beginning of an unsuccessful attempt to alter the Constitution to give greater powers to the Commonwealth was in part derived from and as a matter of political calculation was squarely based on Australia's participation in world affairs. It is the beginning of a highly interesting case study of the interaction of foreign and domestic politics in Australia.

Evatt opened his speech on the Bill with a general reference to the great task of economic rehabilitation and the problems of employment, housing, health and child welfare, vocational training, markets and price stability which would confront Australia after the war. Unless the Commonwealth were given sufficient power by the people "the whole social and economic life of Australia" would be "placed in great jeopardy". If the exercise of national power was necessary for war it was equally necessary for reconstruction. Unless there were constitutional amendments the result in the post-war world would be "social and economic disorganisation, chaos in production, mounting unemployment, widespread social insecurity—in short, anarchy". He continued:

> But the problem goes even deeper. This country, like all the other United Nations, has pledged itself to the task of achieving the broad objectives embodied in the Atlantic Charter and in the historic declaration of the four essential human freedoms.

[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, pp. 81-3.

. . . These declarations are not legal instruments technically binding on Australia; they are far more. They are solemn pledges of our dedication as a nation to the great ends of economic security, social justice and individual freedom. Do we intend to carry out these pledges? The answer is, "Yes, we must." If so, the Australian nation, which is pledged as a nation, must be endowed as a nation with legislative powers to carry out the pledges within Australia and its territories.

This was the main part of his case. The objective, he said, was plainly set out in the title of the Bill. After stressing the aims of "economic security and social justice" he plainly revealed the enormous scope of the power he sought:

It is proposed that the Parliament should have power to make any law which in its own declared opinion will tend to achieve economic security and social justice, including security of employment and the provision of useful occupation for all the people. I desire to make it perfectly clear that the amendment I propose will give the decision to Parliament itself, and no person will be able to challenge the validity of Parliament's decision. For its decisions and actions Parliament will be responsible to one authority only—the people of Australia.

His peroration, expressing a hope that this would not be considered a party measure and that the States would cooperate, was only a prelude to the opposition which rapidly developed outside Parliament and led to the Bill being referred to a Special Committee.[8] The narrative of these political events, culminating in a referendum, will be continued elsewhere[9] and for the time being our interest is confined to the relationship between post-war planning and Australian participation in world affairs.

It has already been remarked that the Bill was derived only in part from Australia's participation in world affairs. At the cost of a digression it can be shown that for some years past Evatt had held the view that the external affairs power of the Commonwealth might embrace a number of subjects customarily regarded as outside the Commonwealth legislative field.

Evatt, as a Justice of the High Court of Australia, had developed the view that the legislative power of the Commonwealth over external affairs (Section 51 (xxix) of the Constitution) included a wide power to execute within the Commonwealth treaties and conventions entered into with foreign powers even although the subject matter of the agreement with these foreign powers was not otherwise within Commonwealth legislative jurisdiction. In company with a fellow judge, McTiernan,[1] he had also taken the view that Parliament "may well be deemed competent" to legislate for the carrying out of "international recommendations or requests upon other matters of concern to Australia as a member of the family of nations" and that it was wrong to prejudice the examination of the content of the subject of "external affairs" by assuming or asserting in advance that there were certain matters which were necessarily excluded from

[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, pp. 1338-41 and 1514-15.

[9] See pp. 524-41 below.

[1] Rt Hon Sir Edward McTiernan, KBE. MLA NSW 1920-27; MHR 1929-30; Justice, High Court of Aust since 1930. B. Glen Innes, NSW, 16 Feb 1892.

Commonwealth legislation enacted in exercise of the external affairs power.[2] With the ingenuity that was characteristic of him he had also argued that this was not really a process of amending the Constitution without the approval of the people because "when, for instance, the Commonwealth enters into a convention as a member of the International Labour Organisation and ratifies the obligations specified therein, such obligations are binding in international law, so that, when subsequently the Commonwealth passes legislation giving effect throughout the Commonwealth to the convention, it is not 'amending the Constitution' but acting strictly within it".[3] Yet it would appear that in the application of this Evatt doctrine, if there were a subject on which the Commonwealth did not have power to legislate and if, using the external affairs power, the Commonwealth entered into an international agreement on that subject (or even joined in passing a resolution at an international conference) it would thereupon gain the power to legislate on it, subject only to the constitutional guarantees given in other sections of the Constitution.

This doctrine had been developed by Mr Justice Evatt with social and industrial changes chiefly in mind. I.L.O. conventions were given by him as illustrations.

Now Mr Evatt, the Cabinet Minister—indeed the Attorney-General—was proposing to go beyond his own doctrine and to make the desired change without the risk of any possible challenge by an amendment of the Constitution which in effect would say that if the Commonwealth Parliament decided that a law would tend to achieve economic security and social justice the Parliament would have the power to pass such a law. Although he reinforced this proposal by referring to Australia's international pledges it would not appear that, in seeking the new method, he was abandoning or relaxing his earlier thesis. Indeed, after his Bill fell into jeopardy and when it was eventually lost, his views on the external affairs power were still held so firmly that they tended to provide him with another impulse to take international action so that under the external affairs power he would extend Commonwealth legislative jurisdiction. In the succeeding years he sought to obtain paragraphs in resolutions of international conferences or in international treaties (notably the United Nations Charter and the Declaration of Philadelphia) which would attract the legislative power to enable the Australian Government to enact social and industrial legislation which would have supremacy over State statutes and expedite the changes which he and his colleagues favoured under a socialist programme. His views on the constitutional question became an element in the shaping of foreign policy. In particular, his enthusiasm for an international obligation to maintain "full employment" was certainly linked with the expectation that the Commonwealth would thereby acquire a very extensive power to enact legislation necessary to do so, not excluding matters such as control of prices, investment and exchange

[2] The King v. Burgess *ex parte* Henry (1936), *Commonwealth Law Reports*, Vol 55, pp. 687 and 680. See also Ffrost v. Stevenson (1937), C.L.R., Vol 58, pp. 596-9.

[3] *Commonwealth Law Reports*, Vol 58, p. 599.

control and direction of manpower. His conversations and oral directions to delegates at international conferences were even more explicit on this point than the written record but in the report on the Philadelphia Conference, on the San Francisco Conference, and on the Anzac Conference, in the booklet prepared for the Constitutional Referendum and in his speeches the aim is evident. While believing in the objective he saw an additional argument for pursuing the objective by international agreement because that method improved the prospect of being able to pursue it successfully at home.[4]

It is probable that the consideration given to the possibility of using the "external affairs" power to cover a wide range of social and economic legislation had been stimulated by the wartime use of the "defence" power and by the knowledge that the use of the "defence" power would be subject to an unwinding process when peace came and the facts of the situation might no longer be held by the Courts to justify its use. Part of the attraction of the "external affairs" power for a centralist was that it could well last through both war and peace and that its scope might only be limited when international conferences reached the yet undiscovered and ever-receding margins of that vast pie into which they might decide at any time to poke a helpful finger.[5]

From early 1943 onwards, both at home and in international conferences, the emphasis falls more and more heavily on a policy of full employment. The chief means of ensuring freedom from want was to maintain full employment. In order to achieve this end, action at home would have to be matched by action in other lands. An international agreement to maintain full employment became an objective of Australian foreign policy and emerged, not only in the Constitutional referendum but in the Government's general arguments related to post-war planning, as one of the clearest political appeals to the voter.

The history of economic policy will be covered in another volume of this series but, in order to appreciate the atmosphere in which political events, both national and international, took place it is necessary to seek

[4] It is certainly not suggested, however, that this was the only or even the main influence that made "full employment" and a planned economy major elements in the Government's post-war policy. See at pages 460-2 below the discussion of the views of L. F. Giblin.

[5] Both the political and constitutional implications of this inquiry have become clearer as each year has passed. Hitherto Australian Governments have been reticent and have continued the practice of referring for comment to each of the State Governments the I.L.O. conventions and of refraining from ratifying them if a State Government objects. Will such a method of sharing national responsibility and national answerability to world opinion be acceptable as the scope of international discussion widens and as the requirement for international regulation, supervision, inspection, report and censure expands? Civil aviation, which was not known when the Commonwealth Constitution was framed, is the subject of international regulation, of formal treaty commitments by Australia and of participation by Australia in the year-round work of an international organisation. In the field of human rights, conventions will be submitted in circumstances in which Australia, and not the constituent States of the Federation, will be expected to give the answer. In the field of nuclear energy, the implementing of any treaty will become a national care touching on matters of high policy which can be shaped only by a national government. To a layman the position appears to be that the Commonwealth executive has undoubted power to make a treaty and the High Court judgment of 1936 means that, if it does so, the Commonwealth Parliament has power to make laws to carry that treaty into effect. But the precise limits of this legislative power have been left vague. In the coming years it is doubtful whether in the national interest the vagueness can continue. Evatt foresaw a great issue when he persuaded his Cabinet colleagues to tackle it by seeking constitutional amendments but he and his colleagues confused the main cause by subordinating it to other political purposes.

a contemporary description of the doctrine. One intended as a popular exposition will suit this purpose best.

During second term of 1943 (i.e. the term commencing in May) a series of lectures was arranged by the University Extension Board at the University of Melbourne and subsequently published in a pamphlet series under the general title, *Realities of Reconstruction.* In the fifth pamphlet of the series L. F. Giblin took the topic "The Problem of Maintaining Full Employment". He accepted freedom from want as a matter of outstanding concern in post-war planning. "I think the sort of thing Australian people want more than anything else after this war is—prevention of unemployment; cures for such unemployment as cannot be averted; and generous relief for it as far as it cannot be immediately cured." He assumed that the demand for a very high level of employment, and for maintaining it, was going to be so strong that every government would have to accept it as a basis of policy.[6] He analysed the various kinds of unemployment. "General" unemployment, the immediate cause of which was that investment was falling below savings, could be met by keeping up the level of investment by action on the part of the State, either by maintaining consumers' expenditure in some way or by public investment or public works. "Structural" unemployment, which took place because at a certain place there was no longer room for people working in a certain trade, could be met (assuming "general" unemployment had been prevented) by transferring people from trade to trade or place to place—a process that called for encouragement and financial help for those being transferred, possibly some re-training and, in the last resort, perhaps compulsion. "Seasonal" unemployment and "occasional" unemployment between one job and another were manageable by a Department of Labour so as to reduce loss. The main point was to maintain employment but the income of those unemployed should be kept up to "a fair level" so as to avoid the fall in spending power that would lead to "secondary" unemployment elsewhere. He dealt with the problems of post-war employment primarily as the transfer of persons in the services and war industries into civilian life and did so rather more optimistically than some of his contemporaries and, as it turned out, rather more truly. He foresaw an expansion of demand after the war and "a very real possibility" of being short of labour. With the spending power accumulated in wartime and held in liquid form—cash, bank deposits, government bonds and war savings certificates—added to the income kept at a high level the amount of potential demand would be enormously greater than the volume of goods and services immediately available. "The trouble will not be the amount of demand for goods, but the task of making those goods available." Giblin presented the main problem thus:

[6] This prediction has been proved true in Australian politics. It has become a fact of Australian political life that the level of employment has passed beyond being an objective to become the chief test of whether economic policies are successful. In popular opinion it is now the chief method of scoring in any political contest about economic policies, so that a policy that is accompanied by a low percentage of unemployment (and the expectation is now below 2 per cent rather than the 10 per cent of Giblin's time) is a better policy than one that is accompanied by a rise in the percentage of unemployed, regardless of the circumstances at home or abroad in which a policy is devised.

It is clear that in the immediate post-war period we shall have a large spending power and not much at first to spend it on; nor shall we be able to get much help from imports. There will be a demand all over the world for consumption goods, and urgent priorities will exist for countries devastated by war. Besides, our own available exports may not be high enough to pay for a great volume of imports. It will therefore be a matter of stepping up our own production as quickly as possible. During that time we shall have just the same problem of restricting excess spending power, for goods will not even be sufficient to match current income. There will be just the same case as in war for high taxation and very big loans as well as controls so as to prevent excess spending power getting out of hand and leading to a rise in prices. For a while, it will be exactly a war position, and we shall only get out of it as quickly insofar as we can speed up our production of ordinary goods and services; and we shall be bound to do this to maintain employment.

The conclusion to be drawn was the necessity for controls for the transition period—control of investment, control of consumption, rationing, control of manpower, control of prices, all of which implied in effect control of production. There could be progressive relaxation of these controls as consumer goods mounted up and production of peace-time goods and services increased with the equipment of industries. He guessed at controls at full strength for perhaps a year and then diminishing in strength for two years, followed by a decision on how much control was to be kept permanently.

Giblin foresaw the dangers of political pressure to get rid of irksome controls, to resist a "pernicious bureaucracy" or to stop trends to socialisation. He did not foresee or, if he did, failed to point out the dangers of opposite political pressure to keep controls after the transitional period had ended. He pointed out, too, the constitutional difficulties and had the clear opinion that unless the Commonwealth had powers to control investment, consumption, prices and, probably, manpower it would be impossible to make "an orderly job of the transition". Even in normal times Australia would certainly do better if it had these powers.

Finally he turned briefly to the relationship between employment and international trade and stressed the need for all countries to agree to keep employment high and so maintain their level of consumption and hence enable Australia to maintain the required level of exports and imports. To get all governments to agree to maintain this high level of employment was one of the fundamentals. He concludes:

If we could get effective international agreement to keep up employment, we need not fear any external repercussions from ourselvs pursuing a policy of maintaining employment at the highest level. If we cannot get agreement on this point, and we maintain employment on a much higher level than other countries, then we shall probably be faced with a serious adverse balance of trade. If we were resolute to maintain employment and refuse deflation, we should have to cut down imports, either by direct restriction of imports, or indirectly by depreciation of the currency. Either way would be bad for us, and would tend to lower our standards of living. Besides, either way would invite retaliation from other countries and lead to a cumulative reduction in world trade, such as we got in the 1920's. Therefore, we want to see that, insofar as we cannot get an international agreement to maintain full employment, or that such an agreement breaks down, there is some arrangement

by which a country put into difficulties could restrict its imports or depreciate its currency to an agreed formula, subject to some international authority.[7]

One of the earliest opportunities to link this thesis of full employment to the international aim of "Freedom from Want" came at a United Nations Food and Agriculture Conference, held, at the invitation of the United States, at Hot Springs, Virginia, from 18th May to 3rd June 1943, to consider how united action in the field of food and agriculture could help to lay foundations for improved standards of nutrition and conditions of economic stability and thereby help to prevent future wars from arising. Australia was one of the 44 participants.

The Australian delegation was a technical one led by Dr H. C. Coombs[8] and was closely in touch with Evatt throughout its work. Its report was appended to a statement made to Parliament by Evatt on 14th October 1943.[9] This report said that the conference had recognised that any substantial improvement in nutrition and food production depended on the national governments themselves and the aim had been "to outline a basis for policy in food and agriculture which would be of benefit both to the country in which they were introduced and of advantage to the world as a whole". The conference had been impressed by the results of wartime experience of "protective foodstuffs" in the United Kingdom. For immediate needs every country which could do so should increase food production, especially food for direct human consumption, and for the future there was a need to adapt production to nutrition requirements, and to adapt policy to technical requirements. These matters depended, however, on the maintenance of "a healthy general economic condition". The promotion of a high level of employment in the major economic countries of the world was an essential for a strong demand for food and agricultural products and so the conference recommended that Governments should direct their economic policy to "full and advantageous employment" and to the improvement of the standards of living. Attention was also given to the development of resources in under-developed areas and the reduction of barriers to international trade. The fluctuations in prices of pre-war years were deplored; and the conference recommended investigation of plans for establishing "buffer stocks" and other "commodity regulation plans".

There were "unresolved issues":

(*a*) A difference of opinion upon the relative importance in general economic policy of domestic measures designed to achieve a high level of employment, and measures to reduce international trade barriers;

(*b*) The degree to which international commodity plans require the control of production.

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[7] For further light on Giblin's views see G. G. Firth, "Giblin and the Post-War Problem, Reconstruction and Full Employment" contributed to *Giblin the Scholar and the Man*, edited by Douglas Copland (1960).

[8] Dr H. C. Coombs. Director of Rationing 1942; Dir-Gen of Post-War Reconstruction 1943-49; Governor, Commonwealth Bank 1949-60, Reserve Bank 1960-68. B. Kalamunda, WA, 24 Feb 1906.

[9] *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol 14, pp. 263-6. The delegation was: H. C. Coombs, F. L. McDougall, E. McCarthy, J. B. Brigden, J. W. Burton. See also *Votes and Proceedings 1943-44*, Vol I, p. 38—No. 10, 14 Oct 1943, Item 13.

The report by the delegation reflects the dominant interests of Australian experts and the nature of the contribution that they sought to make. It will be noted that the two "unresolved issues" were those uppermost in Australian minds.

Finally the conference recommended the establishment of a permanent international body and the work it initiated led eventually to the creation in October 1945 of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (F.A.O.). Australia was a member of the Interim Commission which produced this result.[1]

In his speech of October 1943 Evatt also recounted that there had been informal and exploratory discussions on international monetary policy and referred to plans which had recently been advanced by the United Kingdom for a clearing union and by the United States for a stabilisation fund. In his view, however, these proposals could not in themselves solve basic international economic problems. Australia had insisted that it was "dangerous and erroneous" to embark upon separate solutions of such problems when all had to be viewed "in the light of the overriding postulate of full employment and improving standards".[2]

Towards the end of the year the United Kingdom invited the Australian Government to send officials to London on 21st February 1944 to take part in discussions on various post-war economic proposals which had been drafted by United Kingdom and United States officials. This was to be a prelude to further Anglo-American discussions.

The occasion was taken by Evatt to place before Cabinet a comprehensive paper reviewing the various matters under consideration. The paper, dated 18th January 1944, listed the following proposals by Britain and the United States:

(*a*) An international monetary organisation for stabilising currencies and alleviating balance of payment difficulties;
(*b*) An international investment bank to provide long-term capital for development purposes;
(*c*) An international commodity organisation to supervise the setting up and working of international commodity arrangements;
(*d*) An international commercial policy organisation to supervise and assist implement an international code of commercial behaviour;
(*e*) An international labour and employment organisation to coordinate the policies of the above bodies, and to promote policies of full employment;
(*f*) An international food and agriculture organisation to assist in achieving increased consumption and increased productive efficiency.

The discussion in detail of these proposals and of Australian interest in them belongs more properly to another volume in this series and will not be attempted here. The politically significant fact in Evatt's submission to Cabinet was the constant attention given to employment policy. On the currency plans Australian officials had expressed the view, *inter alia*: "The

[1] *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol 14, pp. 238-9. The representative was F. L. McDougall, Economic Adviser to the Australian High Commissioner in London.
[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, p. 577.

most important safeguard against abnormally large and persistent fluctuations would be a consistent policy by all nations to maintain a high level of employment and to avoid the building up of large credit balances. . . ." On an international convention on commercial policy: "That any general liberalisation of commercial policy can be achieved only if accompanied by domestic measures in all countries to increase levels of employment, incomes and living standards with a consequent increase in demand for the world's goods." On a plan for stabilising prices of primary products: ". . . but emphasis was placed on the need for a world of expanding consumption. . . ." At the conference on a food and agriculture organisation the opportunity had been taken "to emphasise the importance of domestic employment policies. . . ." Then, in his paper to Cabinet, Evatt summarised these views:

> Australian officials have consistently pressed for an employment agreement, which would be an undertaking by nations to pursue policies of full employment, and to consult each other on measures which might be adopted in following an employment policy. Australia is particularly interested in the level of consumption and therefore in the level of employment overseas, and we should regard high levels of employment particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States as a condition of our acceptance of any significant restrictions of our freedom to protect our economy.

Cabinet decided to accept the invitation to take part in the talks by officials and to instruct its own officials to urge the acceptance of Australian proposals for an agreement on employment policy. They set up a Standing Sub-Committee on International Economic Collaboration under the chairmanship of the Minister for External Affairs and consisting of the Deputy Prime Minister (Forde), the Treasurer and Minister for Post-War Reconstruction (Chifley) and the Ministers for War Organisation of Industry (Dedman), Trade and Customs (Keane), Commerce and Agriculture (Scully) and Information (Calwell) to determine the Australian attitude on details of the proposals. They also accepted Evatt's view that the time had arrived when the Anglo-American discussions should be broadened to take in nations which were "more dependent upon external conditions" and that the talks should be moved from the expert level to a level of government responsibility.

In the course of his paper Evatt had referred to the common interests of Australia and New Zealand. One immediate application of his views was to obtain a concerted policy with New Zealand before the talks between Britain and the Dominions commenced in London.

Quite separately, a conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers had been arranged to be held in Canberra from 17th to 21st January 1944.[3] Although economic questions were not on the agenda and were not discussed during the formal proceedings of this conference, the Ministers and officials had an exchange of views on these matters during the visit and a record of the "general understanding" that was reached was given in an exchange of letters between Evatt and the New Zealand Prime

[3] See below, pp. 479-80.

Minister, Mr Peter Fraser. In his letter to Fraser, dated 24th January, Evatt sought New Zealand's agreement to the general lines of policy to be used "as the basis of a directive to the officials taking part in the pending overseas talks". In the next paragraph he stated the Australian view that "the time is fast approaching when the governments arranging these talks and putting forward proposals informally should be expected to put them forward on the footing of government responsibility". Evatt's statement in the letter of "our common point of view" is perhaps the earliest complete statement of Australian foreign economic policy for the post-war world:

(1) Because a high level of employment is a fundamental condition of better standards of living throughout the world, it is agreed to press strongly for an international agreement by which (a) subscribing countries will bind themselves to pursue domestic policies aimed at full employment and (b) existing organisations (such as the I.L.O.) will be used, or a new international organisation established, to facilitate the exchange of information and consultation with each other on employment policy, and generally to give effect to the international agreement.

(2) During the immediate post-war period the economic situation will be in a state of flux, and the economic policies of all countries will still be unsettled. It is agreed, therefore, to advocate and support such forms of international economic collaboration in the transition period as should make it unnecessary for countries to adopt policies of aggressive economic nationalism.

(3) Every effort should be made to obtain, as a permanent feature of international economic relations, a maximum degree of collaboration. However, because of the uncertainty of the economic future it may be impracticable at the outset for many countries to accept inflexible obligations of a far-reaching character. In such circumstances, it is desirable, as a preliminary step, that limited agreements should be sought which would provide at least for regular consultation between nations. These may well lead progressively to more comprehensive agreements.

(4) It is necessary for countries which are not fully developed or are highly dependent on a narrow range of exports to be able under any agreement
   (a) to use such economic measures, for example import selection, exchange control, state trading and British Commonwealth preferences, as may from time to time prove necessary to ensure continued stability. The need for these measures will decrease to the extent that international collaborations prove successful;
   (b) to develop and diversify their industries.

(5) All agreements affecting Australia and New Zealand should take into special account the dislocations and developments which have been made necessary by their total war efforts, and also of accumulated needs resulting from the prolonged diversions from their peace-time production.

In acknowledging this letter of 24th January, Fraser undertook to place it before the New Zealand Cabinet and on 2nd February he wrote to say that his Cabinet had approved and accepted the "principles" Evatt had set out. Officials representing New Zealand at "the forthcoming London talks" were being instructed on the "general lines of policy agreed upon in this exchange of notes".[4]

[4] *Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers, held at Canberra, 17th to 21st January 1944: Proceedings of the Conference*, pp. 34-5. L. G. Melville was appointed to attend the London talks.

An opportunity to advance the Australian views in a wider international forum came with the Twenty-Sixth International Labour Conference which commenced at Philadelphia on 20th April 1944.

In a statement on 17th March about the Mutual Aid Agreement between Canada and Australia Evatt had found another opportunity to declare publicly the Australian Government's view that, in promoting mutually advantageous post-war international economic relations, "the objectives can best be attained by attaching primary and indeed supreme importance to the adoption of measures designed to promote full employment and increased production and consumption of goods". He also gave in paraphrase the five points which had been set out in the letter to Fraser, declaring them to be "Australia's general policy in relation to international economic collaboration".[5]

At the Philadelphia conference the chief Australian Government delegate, Beasley, Minister for Supply and Shipping, devoted his speech in the plenary session to Australia's foreign economic policy as already outlined by Evatt and gave notice of a resolution recommending to governments that an international conference be held to consider an international agreement on domestic policies of employment and unemployment. He distributed to delegates the draft of an International Employment Agreement.

In the final outcome the conference agreed to a declaration, to become known as the Philadelphia Charter, and rejected the Australian proposal for a special agreement. The Philadelphia Charter expressed a broader interest in the post-war world than that expressed in the Australian proposal. It reaffirmed the purpose of social justice and declared as the "central aim of national and international policy" the attainment of the conditions in which all human beings have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity. All national and international policies and measures, in particular those of an economic and financial character, should be judged only in so far as they might be held to promote and not to hinder the achievement of this fundamental objective. It listed full employment and the raising of standards of living as one among a number of the goals which nations had an obligation to try to achieve. "The fuller and broader utilisation of the world's productive reserves" was necessary for the achievement of the objectives set forth in the Charter—not merely the increasing of the demand—and the international and national action required for this covered a wider range than the Australian proposal. Part of the weakness in the Australian case appears to be that it stressed too much the self-interest of exporting countries in search of a market. For example, the speeches of Beasley left the general impression and stated explicitly in some passages that Australia wanted full employment in countries like Britain and America because of the size of the market there and showed a lesser concern about full employment in countries of a lower standard of living.

[5] See *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol 15, p. 55, for text of agreement; *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 178, pp. 1554-7 for statement and text of agreement.

The report of the Australian Government delegates lays a good deal of blame on the United States Government and on Britain for the failure to obtain endorsement for the proposal for an international agreement on employment, with binding obligations. There would appear to have been throughout a difference of outlook. The larger countries saw a wide range of problems—monetary policy, freedom of trade, commodity prices, the expansion of production, for example—each of which had an influence in bringing about a high level of employment. While the Australian Government, in its thoughtful moments, might have recognised the cogency of this argument, Beasley put the position to the conference more crudely:

> Delegates will know that at the present time negotiations are in progress regarding monetary policy, and the United Nations have under discussion other matters of economic collaboration such as commercial policy. It is our attitude, and it must be the attitude of every country greatly dependent upon overseas trade, that we cannot possibly restrict our freedom of action with respect to monetary and commercial policy without some assurance that high levels of employment and consumption will be maintained particularly in the main consuming areas.

Another question that was raised and left with a difference of opinion still existing was whether this particular conference, with tripartite representation, was the appropriate place in which to try to float an international agreement of this kind requiring commitment by Governments.

The report of the delegation claimed achievements for Australia at Philadelphia rather greater than the facts seem to justify. They strongly asserted the Australian foreign economic policy. It is not so clear that they advanced it.[6]

Employment policy was also emphasised by the Australian contributions to the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference held at Bretton Woods in the United States from 1st to 22nd July 1944. Exploratory financial and economic talks had taken place earlier and an invitation of 26th May to attend an international conference on post-war monetary organisation was before the Cabinet on 30th May. There had been some thought of asking Beasley to remain in America and attend, and this would have been in keeping with the view that these matters should now be raised to the level of Government responsibility, but on 12th June, when a report on the proposed scheme for an International Monetary Fund was before the Cabinet, it was decided that representation would be "on an official expert level only".[7]

The conference had before it proposals for an International Monetary Fund. The purpose of the fund was to promote international monetary cooperation, to facilitate the expansion and balanced growth of international trade, and to influence countries to correct maladjustments in their balance of payments and to fulfil their obligations under the fund.

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[6] *International Labour Organisation of the League of Nations—Twenty-Sixth Conference held at Philadelphia, U.S.A., 20 April to 13 May 1944: Report of the Australian Delegates* (Command Paper, 1 Dec 1944). The report of the Australian delegates falls a long way below the customary standard of such reports to Parliament both in syntax and in objectivity. It is not a reliable account of what happened at Philadelphia.

[7] The delegation was led by L. G. Melville and included J. B. Brigden, F. H. Wheeler and A. H. Tange.

To finance rehabilitation and reconstruction during the transitional period between war and peace would be the function of an International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The conference was aware of the need to reduce tariffs and other barriers of trade if the Fund was to be a success and so resolved that recommendations should go to participating governments to reach agreement on this matter, as well as on the orderly marketing at fair prices of staple commodities. Governments should also "facilitate by cooperative effort the harmonising of the national policies of member States designed to promote and maintain high levels of employment and progressively rising standards of living".

The Australian delegation proposed that there should be a specific agreement to maintain high levels of employment but other countries' delegations held the view that intrusion into domestic policy to this extent required much more careful study and would be better dealt with as part of the subsequent conversations envisaged in Article VII of the Mutual Aid Agreements. An Australian resolution for a full employment agreement was lost.

The report of the Australian delegation said:

> It appears that declarations of the Australian Government's attitude on this matter which have been made from time to time by the Minister for External Affairs, and the case made by the Australian representatives at the Hot Springs Conference, in British Commonwealth discussions in London, at Philadelphia and at Bretton Woods have made a considerable impression. There now seem to be good prospects of securing widespread support for an employment agreement as part of a programme of international economic cooperation.[8]

This comment was somewhat optimistic. In a letter to Curtin, dated 14th December, the leader of the delegation, Melville, drew attention to the method of working at these conferences and to the reality that the establishment of new organisations depended on prior agreement among the powers that carried the major commitments and once this agreement had been reached (for example between Britain and the United States) it was unlikely to be broken without the risk of wrecking the conference. Australia's best hope was to take advantage of Commonwealth meetings to influence the United Kingdom and to gain some support from Latin American countries in order to influence the United States before conferences on this or related subjects took place. "This will always be true," he said, "in cases where Australia desires to open up the question of employment policy, which, despite official statements made from time to time in Australia and at the I.L.O. Conference at Philadelphia, was to many of the delegates at Bretton Woods a new and not clearly understood field of discussion.[9]

In November 1944 at Ministerial talks held at Wellington between Australian and New Zealand Ministers and attended by Forde and Evatt for

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[8] *Documents Relating to the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference held at Bretton Woods, U.S.A., from 1 July to 22 July 1944* (Parliamentary Papers 1944, Vol II, p. 1583—No. 13, Group B, F5402).

[9] Report by Melville on "Procedure and Working of Bretton Woods Monetary and Financial Conference", forwarded to Curtin with a letter dated at the Commonwealth Bank, Sydney, 14th December 1944.

Australia and Fraser and Nash[10] for New Zealand the view was recorded that an Employment Conference aimed at the achievement of an Employment Agreement to pursue internal policies of full employment and improved living standards should take precedence over all other international economic discussions. It was proposed to ask the United States Government to call such a conference in conjunction with the United Kingdom, Australian and New Zealand Governments, but the request does not appear to have been made formally and no such conference was in fact called.[1]

The next and last international opportunity came at the United Nations Conference on International Organisation at San Francisco in April-June 1945. The Australian delegation, led by Forde and Evatt, took an active part in the work of Committee 3 of Commission 2, which was the technical committee dealing with economic and social cooperation, and while it is difficult to claim for any single delegation sole credit for this or that phrase in the Charter, the Australian representatives certainly worked prominently with others to turn the vague words of the Dumbarton Oaks draft, which expressed an obligation "to facilitate solutions of international . . . problems" into a more precise obligation on the United Nations to "promote . . . higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development . . ." (Article 55) and a "pledge" by all Members "to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organisation for the achievement of the purposes set forth in Article 55" (Article 56). This "pledge" in Article 56 was the outcome of an original Australian proposal that each Member should pledge itself to take independent, separate national action to achieve full employment and the other purposes of Article 55. Part of the difficulty in gaining full acceptance of the Australian view was the concern of some delegations lest the United Nations might gain power to intervene in affairs within the domestic jurisdiction of a state. This concern was lessened but not removed by the drafting of Article 2(7) which said that nothing contained in the Charter "shall authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter. . . ." In practice, Article 2(7) has provided more debating points about United Nations intervention than actual protection from it, but without it many of the provisions of the Charter with a constructive purpose probably would not have been accepted at San Francisco. Evatt never really thought through the problem. He wanted as much as he could get to oblige other nations to maintain full employment. He wanted an international obligation which would assist the Australian Government to maintain full employment at home and presumably this was not a field in which he would fear the consequences of international inspection and

[10] Rt Hon Sir Walter Nash, GCMG, CH. NZ Minister for Finance and Customs 1935-49; Minister in USA 1942-44; Prime Minister 1957-60. B. Kidderminster, England, 1882. Died 4 Jun 1968.

[1] Document ANZ(2), No. 50 (External Affairs file 44/630/5/1/11/22) signed by Prime Minister of New Zealand and Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, 6 Nov 1944. See also pp. 495-6 and 498–9 below for an account of other aspects of the meeting.

report or subsequent recommendations regarding Australian employment policy.

While the San Francisco Conference was still in progress, the Curtin Government published in Australia its White Paper on Full Employment[2] which was to become a highly significant document not only in its post-war domestic policy but also in its political appeal to the Australian electorate. The judgments to be made on this policy call for wider evidence than can come within the scope of the present volume. What has been recorded here are the facts relevant to an understanding, on the one hand of the interaction between Australian domestic policy and one aspect of its war-time political activities in world affairs and on the other hand of the train of economic thinking from which the wartime planning of post-war reconstruction emerged.

From that limited view three remarks may be pertinent. On the domestic scene, it is questionable whether the Government gave as much attention to checking the accuracy of its forecasts as it did to the plans for handling the conditions forecast. If soldiers are to be chided for making plans for the next war in terms of the last war, can economists be asked whether they were preparing for the post-war world in terms of the economic depression of the thirties? On the external scene, one comment is that in its international advocacy of the doctrine Australia tended to concentrate on employment in the fully-developed industrial countries of North America and Britain in which it had its own biggest overseas markets and so was advocating a policy that suited the Australian economy while claiming its suitability for all the world. As one example there is little sign of any differentiation between State-controlled economies and free economies and little interest expressed in either the less-developed countries or the enemy countries such as Japan. The other is that Australia tended to isolate the importance of a full employment agreement from the other measures that other nations, and even Australia in its reflective moments, would regard as being equally if not more important for an active and thriving world economy. It will be recalled that in the statement of Australian economic policy for the post-war world during discussions with New Zealand the Government had put the emphasis strongly on an agreement on employment. In other official papers, however, a broader approach can be seen and, in the final event, Australia did herself become party to the agreements establishing the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the International Monetary Fund and Bank for Reconstruction and Development. She might have preferred to go to another show but these were the only ones open so she went and became not only a party to an agreement but an active and constructive member of an organisation.

We shall now go back on our tracks to pick up those other two themes that were noted above as dominating Australia's participation in international discussion of the post-war world—the right of Australia to partici-

[2] *Full Employment in Australia* (Parliamentary Paper, 30 May 1945, No. 11, Group H, 2730).

pate fully and to assert an independent Australian interest; and the special claims of the Pacific and the Far East.

During 1943 and 1944 consultation among the Great Powers produced some coordination of policies in respect of the termination of the war and the shape of the post-war world. A chronology of these Great Power meetings will give the framework for the study of Australian policy.

From 14th to 26th January 1943 Roosevelt and Churchill met at Casablanca, surveyed the entire field of the war theatre by theatre and marshalled the resources for its more intense prosecution. Roosevelt, in a press statement at the end of the conference, suggested that the meeting be called the "Unconditional Surrender" meeting for, he said, "the United Nations were determined that peace could only come to the world by the unconditional surrender of the Axis Powers and the total elimination of their war power. This did not mean the destruction of the German, Italian and Japanese peoples, but the destruction of the philosophies in these countries based on fear and hate and the subjugation of other peoples."[3]

Churchill, in the House of Commons on 11th February said: "But our inflexible insistence upon unconditional surrender does not mean that we shall stain our victorious arms by any cruel treatment of whole populations. But justice must be done upon the wicked and the guilty, and, within her proper bounds, justice must be stern and implacable. No vestige of the Nazi or Fascist power, no vestige of the Japanese war plotting machine, will be left by us when the work is done, and done it certainly will be." He reaffirmed the plan for victory in Europe first followed by the transfer of forces to the Far Eastern theatre and prosecution of war against Japan with the utmost vigour until unconditional surrender had been enforced.[4]

In August 1943 at Quebec another meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill brought military decisions concerning the war against Japan[5] and opened the way to the recognition of the French Committee of Liberation by the United States, United Kingdom and Soviet Union and to a meeting between the Big Three.

The tripartite conference in Moscow from 19th to 30th October 1943 was the first meeting at which Britain, America and the Soviet Union considered the future organisation of peace as well as the military effort. It produced a communiqué by the three Foreign Ministers, Eden, Hull and Molotov, a Declaration on General Security in the name of the Governments of the Big Three and of China, and Declarations by the Governments of the Big Three on Italy, Austria and German Atrocities. The major declaration provided for closer collaboration in the prosecution of the war and for all matters pertaining to the surrender and disarmament of the enemies. They pledged themselves to continue their united action "for the organisation and maintenance of peace and security" and recognised "the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organisation, based on the principle of the sovereign

[3] *Bulletin of International News*, 1943, Vol XX, p. 99.
[4] *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol 386, pp. 1468-76.
[5] See pp. 372-3 above.

equality of all peace-loving states, and open to membership by all such states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security". The Declaration on German Atrocities committed them to a policy of punishment of offenders, a distinction being made between those responsible for atrocities, who would be sent back to the countries where their "abominable deeds" were done in order to be judged and punished according to the laws of the liberated countries, and the "major criminals" whose offences had no particular geographical localisation and who would be punished by the joint decision of the Governments of the Allies.

The Conference decided to establish in London a European Advisory Commission to ensure close cooperation on European questions.

From 22nd to 26th November Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek met at Cairo to do in respect of the war against Japan the equivalent to what the Moscow Conference had done in respect of the war in Europe.[6] They committed themselves publicly to a policy of unconditional surrender; the giving up by Japan of all occupied territories in terms which virtually meant confining Japan to the pre-1914 boundaries, and the independence of Korea.

Then Churchill and Roosevelt went on to meet Stalin at Teheran from 28th November to 1st December. The three leaders declared their determination that their nations should work together in war and in the peace that would follow—a peace that would "banish the scourge and terror of war for many generations". They promised to "seek the cooperation and active participation of all nations, large and small, whose peoples in heart and mind are dedicated, as are our own peoples, to the elimination of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance. We will welcome them, as they may choose to come, into a world family of Democratic Nations." The three of them looked with confidence "to the day when all peoples of the world may live free lives, untouched by tyranny, and according to their varying desires and their own consciences". It was an unusually emotional declaration. "We came here with hope and determination. We leave here, friends in fact, in spirit and in purpose."

A second conference was held at Quebec from 11th to 16th September 1944 between Churchill and Roosevelt and led to a second meeting between them and Stalin at Yalta, between 4th and 11th February 1945. Besides matters concerned with the military effort, agreement was reached on the arrangements for calling a United Nations conference on a proposed world organisation, and on the list of nations to be invited. Common policies and plans for enforcing unconditional surrender terms on Germany, the re-establishment of liberated countries in Europe, the particular problems of Poland and Yugoslavia, war criminals and reparation.

In a separate agreement the Soviet Union undertook to enter the war against Japan on the side of the Allies "in two or three months after Germany has surrendered and the war in Europe has terminated" on

[6] The Soviet Union was not then at war with Japan. On 30th October, however, Stalin had told Hull, in Moscow, that when the Allies succeeded in defeating Germany, the Soviet Union would then join in defeating Japan. See *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (1948), Vol II, p. 1309.

condition that the Soviet Union got back the territories and rights lost to Japan in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, and gained the Kurile Islands. The Soviet Union undertook to conclude a pact of friendship and alliance with China. This "Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Post-War Collaboration" was eventually signed at Moscow on 14th August 1945, following the Soviet declaration of war on Japan on 8th August. The treaty, with a term of thirty years, came into force upon ratification by the two Governments on 24th August. In an exchange of Notes at the time of signature, the Soviet Union pledged its "moral support and aid in military supplies and other material resources" to the "National Government as the central government of China". China recognised the right of Outer Mongolia to self-determination and independence.

On the subjects under discussion, the Australian Government had a wide range of information, mostly from British and American official sources. The complaint sometimes made at failure of the Allies to consult Australia on matters affecting Australian interests may have been justified if consultation means a direct request to Australia to express an opinion on a matter specifically brought to its notice by another Government. It was not justified if consultation still leaves on a Government some responsibility for obtaining and studying information and finding its own opportunities for making its views known in the most effective way. One of the consequences of the highly personal way in which Evatt attended to his duties as Minister for External Affairs was that representatives in Washington and London were handicapped by not always knowing what their own Government was after and Evatt handicapped himself by not always availing himself of the help that his own department and representatives overseas could have given him. Information on all the matters mentioned in the Great Power conferences was being received and studied in the Department of External Affairs but what appeared to affront Evatt, particularly in the case of the Cairo Conference, was that the conferences should reach agreement and publish the commitments of the Great Powers to each other on matters with which Australia was vitally concerned without a prior Government-to-Government communication seeking Australian concurrence.

Another impediment was caused by the fact that Roosevelt preferred a method by which the British Commonwealth had consultations among its own members and then allowed the United Kingdom to speak for all, while the Soviet Union did not believe that the Dominions had any real independence from Britain. Furthermore the political reality and the practical necessity of wartime consultation of the Allies was that it was consultation of the Big Three and the best chance that Australia had of using any influence was to influence the views of one or other of them rather than to attempt to make its single voice heard on its own.

Evatt set out the situation clearly and fairly in his speech to Parliament on 14th October 1943, even although his practice had not always been consistent with this profession. He said that, broadly speaking, there were two means for expression of Australian views. One was by consultation

within the British Commonwealth with a view to joint action. The other was by using Australia's "distinct international status". There was a considerable degree of communication between Canberra and London. Information was readily forthcoming and as a general rule there was opportunity to express views before decisions were taken. As one of his three examples of occasions on which Australia had been fully informed he mentioned "the arrangements and proposals to be discussed at the Three Power meeting in Moscow"—an event which was still a week away. He pointed out, however, that while the British Government placed proposals before the self-governing Dominions and each Dominion expressed its opinion, the final action often had to be taken by the British Government on its exclusive responsibility. There was "an easily understood tendency towards acquiescence or conformity". He mentioned these difficulties, not to complain but to describe the background against which the question of closer consultation would have to be considered. It was because the ties with the British Commonwealth were "fundamental in our external policy" that Australia placed so much emphasis on the necessity to improve the machinery for consultation and he recalled that Curtin had recently opened up that question.

The improvement of British Commonwealth consultation in peacetime, building on the intimacy of Australian membership of the War Cabinet, engaged Curtin's mind more and more as peace came nearer. The statements to which Evatt referred had been made somewhat tentatively. First, on 14th August, Curtin had expressed a belief that "some Imperial authority must be evolved so that the British Commonwealth of Nations will have, if not an executive body, at least a standing consultative body" and he added the view: "An Empire council may lead to some larger world body about which men have dreamed." Then, on 6th September, he had elaborated: "I visualise a council with a structure similar to the present Pacific War Council, on which representatives of the Dominions could consult regularly with representatives of the British Government. Dominion representatives could be the respective High Commissioners, and they could be replaced at appropriate intervals by a special representative who would be a Minister". He thought this Empire council could meet occasionally in other Commonwealth capitals as well as in London and that it would be served by a permanent secretariat.

The line of thinking that prompted these suggestions was that the same collaboration that had been achieved in wartime should be continued in peacetime, that Australia would need the backing of a "concerted Empire policy" if she was to be a power in the Pacific and similarly Britain would be strengthened in the world and become a power for peace if she could speak for the Empire. The "economic war" in the post-war years would be fierce and complex and Australia must ensure that her voice in economic matters was heard as it was being heard in wartime.[7]

It is doubtful whether Curtin had made himself thoroughly familiar

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 63, pp. 11-13.

with all aspects of the problem at that stage and he does not appear to have had the benefit of any studies or advice by departments. The indications are that he may have been influenced by the views, in the tradition of Hankey, which are known to have been held by Shedden as the result of his pre-war experience of Imperial Defence and of Imperial Conferences.[8] At a slightly later stage the advising of Shedden became evident.

The belief that the Pacific War Council might be a model for Commonwealth machinery was the outcome of an illusion that had been nurtured by the public claims by the Government that the creation of the Council was a major achievement for Australia and that the Council gave Australia participation in the higher direction of the war, whereas in fact the Council had already become a mechanism for keeping small partners happy, was doing little business of any significance, and its members were receiving fewer confidences in Washington than an Australian Ambassador might receive by direct approach. Curtin had chosen a poor example to illustrate his hopes.[9]

In the following months the attempt to improve British Commonwealth machinery and procedures for making and applying common policies continued to be a necessary concern of both Curtin and Evatt because at that time the Commonwealth afforded in practice one of the few available openings for Australia to take a more effective part in the conduct of the war and the pursuit of her post-war international objectives. In the case of Curtin, too, it would appear that experience as Prime Minister had strengthened considerably his regard both for the Commonwealth and for the leadership of Britain. He had learnt to appreciate more the ties of tradition, kinship and common allegiance, the peculiar quality of the free association of members of the Commonwealth, and the value of a long-term association in defence. While others might be dreaming of a Federation of the World or new international organisations, the cast of Curtin's

[8] Lord Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference* (1946), pp. 157-8, said that Curtin's "practical proposals" were "all much in my own line of thought".

[9] Right to the end, Evatt retained this illusion about the Pacific War Council. In December 1944, at a time when the Council had virtually ceased to function as originally planned, he sent a telegram to the Australian Minister in Washington suggesting that the Council be used as one means of furthering Australian-New Zealand participation in armistice planning and armistice control in the Pacific. The Minister should endeavour to obtain regular meetings for consultation leading to the preparation of surrender instruments for Japan, supervision of the execution of the armistice terms, and rehabilitation of occupied territories and consideration of the future of Thailand, Korea and Indo-China. The Minister was instructed to approach the President. (Telegram 2077 to Australian Minister, Washington, 19th December 1944.) The Minister replied expressing doubt whether the President would treat a meeting of the Council seriously or allow it to be made a vehicle for such important decisions. If he did not the effect would be to side-track Australia. The proceedings of the Council were not sufficiently private for this work. (Telegram 1250 from Australian Legation, Washington, 21st December 1944.) Evatt did not reply until after Christmas. He eulogised the Council and especially the good work it had done at the two meetings he attended himself. The Council should be "set in motion again". (Telegram 69 to Australian Legation, Washington, 15th January 1945.) On the same day he sought support from New Zealand in a telegram to Fraser but when the reply came through the New Zealand High Commissioner in Canberra on 8th February it expressed doubt whether the Council would be any better in the future than in the past, and to call it together might lead to a side-track. The matter of gaining a voice in affairs could be best dealt with by a direct approach. As late as 24th June, however, Evatt still persisted in thinking this method was best and by an aide-memoire forwarded to Secretary of State Stettinius at San Francisco he said that the Australian Government regarded the body as an advisory council of great importance. They felt that they were not taken into the confidence of the United States Government as they were when the Council functioned regularly under the chairmanship of the President and so he asked that President Truman should review the situation urgently "to establish consultative machinery of a character which would be at least as effective as that of the Pacific War Council".

mind as a practised politician led him to see more value in an association that he knew, based on loyalties and habits that he had seen applied, than on unknown and untried methods. Those who may be inclined to exaggerate or to quote out of context the words used by Curtin in January 1942 when appealing for aid from the United States might well balance their study of Curtin's thought by his statements of 1943 and 1944 on Britain and the British Commonwealth. Evatt, on the other hand, would appear to have seen primarily the wartime opportunities that the British Commonwealth gave for exerting Australian influence and in due course he came to see that an organisation of the United Nations would give him wider opportunities both to declare Australian views and, in those cases where Australian views differed from those of the Allies, to overcome the impediment of Big Power responsibility by mobilising new and more numerous supporters from among smaller nations.

On 14th December 1943, at the 16th Commonwealth Conference of the Australian Labour Party in Canberra mentioned earlier, Curtin gave the first carefully prepared elaboration of his ideas. His speech shows unmistakably the influence of Shedden. It quoted the Imperial Conference of 1926, gave a text-book exposition of the evolution of the "Third British Empire" and continued: "In the fourth Empire, which is approaching, the trend is to augment an association of independent sovereign peoples by a common policy in matters that concern the Empire as a whole." His inquiry into the principles and the "machinery for Empire cooperation" by which a common policy might be achieved led him first to an historical summary that reads more like the standard texts than like a speech by Curtin.

The occasion was perhaps one where he felt the need for a prepared exposition. He was addressing the Federal Conference of his own party, composed of delegates from each of the six States and with power to shape the policy his Government would follow. He was seeking support for a resolution reaffirming that Australia should collaborate with other peace-loving nations to establish peace in accordance with the Atlantic Charter and adding what Curtin described as "two positives":

(1) The evolution of the British Commonwealth has exemplified the manner in which autonomous nations can cooperate on matters of mutual interest.
(2) Participation in the further development of cooperation among the members of the British Commonwealth, the nations of the world at large, and the Pacific nations in particular, should be subject to the sovereign control of the policy of Australia by its own people, Parliament and Government.[1]

The resolution was carried unanimously after some delegates had expressed concern lest Australia's immigration policy might be interfered with, and lest the Atlantic Charter might damage the economic life of Australia and after other delegates had reassured them and had spoken of the opportunity of securing a "workers' peace".

In his speech, after the historical exposition, Curtin repeated the well-

[1] A delightful example of Curtin's political draftsmanship. He asked for authority to cooperate by proposing that cooperation should be subject to control.

established Australian view that in Empire cooperation there could be no substitute for conferences of Prime Ministers on questions of major Empire policy but, as they could not be constantly in session together, there was need for other machinery. He proposed that the High Commissioners in London and the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs should be a standing sub-committee of the Imperial Conference, presided over by the British Prime Minister or his deputy, and co-opting other British and Dominion Ministers where necessary. There should be other Ministerial meetings on particular subjects. A secretariat of the Imperial Conference, on which all Dominions would be represented, should be located in London but should be an "ambulatory body" to function for conferences wherever they were held.

Curtin continued that there had been two main experiments in cooperation between autonomous nations—the British Commonwealth and the League of Nations. The Atlantic Charter had now declared the principles on which "a broad system of international cooperation and security should be based". Experience showed that the best results would come by evolution from a nucleus of Great Powers in association with other peace-loving nations. He spoke of Australian interest in the principle of regional arrangements. Cooperation between members of the British Commonwealth for their common interests was closely akin to the principle of regional collaboration between neighbours and in the Pacific region he foresaw collaboration by Australia both with Britain, Canada and New Zealand on the Commonwealth side and with "foreign neighbours"—the French, Dutch, Portuguese and Americans.

The peroration, which has the ring of spontaneous speech, used the phrase "mutuality in peace" as there had been in war. Although the sovereign power of the Australian Government must always remain, Curtin concluded: "I believe that Australia cannot be governed in the years to come, with the teeming millions of coloured races to the north of Australia, without being harnessed to other nations."[2]

The final stage in the attempt to improve the Commonwealth machinery came with the presentation by Curtin of his proposals to the Prime Ministers' Conference in London on 15th May 1944. These proposals were closely similar to his statement to the A.L.P. Conference. On his return, Curtin did not claim any great success for this particular part of his mission. The United Kingdom Government did not proceed beyond what had been laid down about defence cooperation at earlier Imperial Conferences. Mackenzie King (Canada) thought the questions raised would have to be carefully considered along with the whole range of matters connected with world security. Smuts (South Africa) expressed no opinion and, in fact, although Curtin did not say so in his report, neither Churchill nor Smuts was present at the session when Curtin's proposals were discussed. Curtin learnt from the discussions that the Dominions had different experiences. "I do not seek to convert my

[2] *Australian Labour Party: Official Report of Proceedings of the 16th Commonwealth Conference*, pp. 27 and 51-5.

friend, Mr Mackenzie King, to my view, any more than I can accept, from the Australian point of view, his opinion that the present means of cooperation has worked with complete success." He continued to draw the moral that even in the British Commonwealth the growth of cooperation had been slow and it remained to be seen how quickly and effectively a system of world security could be developed and maintained. At this final stage, the concern expressed by Curtin about improving Commonwealth cooperation seemed to be centred wholly on the problem of security. "By cooperation among ourselves," he said, "we also contribute to world security at large. The one is complementary to the other."[3]

The conference in London had expressed general agreement with a proposal for monthly meetings of High Commissioners. The Prime Ministers undertook to consult their Governments on the proposals for improving defence cooperation and also undertook to consider further whether a technical committee should be set up to examine any of the other Curtin proposals. In fact, the stream had run into the sand.[4]

Meanwhile other tendencies had been gaining in strength. In his speech to Parliament of October 1943 Evatt had declared a number of Australian interests. Drawing together his observations on a wide range of topics, the following main interests can be isolated. First, Australia had a right to take part in all aspects of the post-war settlement. He rejected the idea that the post-war European settlement should be limited to those nations who were prepared to "police" it. Australia was greatly concerned in the European settlement. The centre of the British Commonwealth and Empire was there. In peacetime much of the trade was with Europe. Immigrants came from Europe. Our culture was European. European colonies were neighbours of Australia. One of the three great powers of Continental Europe, the Soviet Union, was also a world power and would be "a great force in the Pacific of tomorrow". Therefore peace, order and good government in Europe were vital to Australia.

Second, Australia's predominant interest must lie in the Pacific regions and Australia had "a leading part" to play in those regions. ". . . because of our special geographical position and our growing responsibility and power, we can and should make a very special contribution towards the establishment and maintenance of the peace settlement in South-East Asia and the Pacific." He mentioned as particular interests an island chain of defence, landing grounds for civil aviation, trade and shipping and the welfare of colonial peoples and their steady advancement economically, socially and politically.

Third, permanent collaboration between Australia and New Zealand was "pivotal to a sound post-war Pacific policy". Collaboration should also be sought with Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, the United States and Canada. Reference was made less precisely to "other powers in North and South America and on the Asiatic mainland". He spoke of

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 179, pp. 39-40.

[4] Other aspects of the Prime Ministers' meeting are recounted below.

"close cooperation with China" as essential and said that the Soviet Union was also "destined to play an important part in the affairs of the East".

Fourth, while the leadership of the Great Powers was recognised, the smaller nations of the world should be brought into "the framework of an organised family of nations determined to give effect to the declared objectives of the United Nations".

Fifth, Australia should fight hard to see that the principles of the Atlantic Charter were carried into practical effect "to the greatest extent possible". At another point he said:

> The broad objective of Australia's foreign policy is to do our utmost to obtain world conditions in which we may secure peace, national development and prosperity for our people in accordance with our ideals of a democratic way of life. Recognising this, we also recognise that our own security, our national development and our prosperity are impossible of achievement unless we are ready to collaborate with other peace-loving nations so that "all the men in all the lands shall live out their lives in freedom from fear and want".[5]

A week later the results of the Three-Power meeting at Moscow were announced. Evatt hailed it as "one of the outstanding political events of the war". He welcomed the establishment of the European Advisory Commission. This accorded with the references he had already made in his speech of 14th October to a suggestion by Churchill for regional councils within the framework of a world organisation and he already had in his mind the idea of a Pacific Council in which Australia would take a leading part.

Curtin warmly welcomed the Moscow declaration as an assurance that the wartime collaboration of the Powers would be continued in the post-war period.

> Australia, with its special responsibilities in the Pacific region (he said), will not fail to fulfil its due part in the wider international security system which the declaration envisages and, in the meantime, will be ready to consult when occasion requires, with the governments party to the declaration in the policing requirements which will arise immediately on the termination of hostilities.[6]

In the 14th October speech Evatt had described permanent collaboration with New Zealand as "pivotal". A week later he wrote to the New Zealand High Commissioner suggesting an early exchange of views between Ministers.[7] The invitation was welcomed but Fraser, the New Zealand Prime Minister, was ill and there was uncertainty about the date to be fixed for a prospective meeting of Prime Ministers in London.[8] Eventually

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[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, pp. 567-79.

[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 68, pp. 7-8.

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 55, p. 11, 27 Feb 1943. Curtin announced that the two governments had agreed to exchange High Commissioners, and that C. A. Berendsen had been appointed New Zealand High Commissioner in Australia. He had been permanent head of the New Zealand Prime Minister's Department from 1932 and secretary of their War Cabinet since 1939. *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 68, p. 6, 1 Nov 1943—Evatt announced T. G. de L. D'Alton as Australian High Commissioner in New Zealand. He had been Deputy Premier of Tasmania.

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 65, p. 24, 7 Oct 1943; *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, p. 234. Curtin was questioned in the House about a meeting and a reported statement by Churchill; he could only say it would be held "so soon as it is practicable".

on 28th December a simultaneous announcement was made that there would be a conference in Canberra from 17th January.[9]

The preparatory work for the conference was done in the Australian Department of External Affairs and the proceedings of the conference were considerably expedited by the circulation by Evatt of an annotated agenda so that the business sessions applied themselves chiefly to the endorsement, amendment or rejection of successive paragraphs of Evatt's draft. The original intention was that the agreement reached in this manner would be recorded in a series of resolutions to be adopted by the conference in its final session but half-way through the conference it was decided on the initiative of Evatt to express the agreement in a more formal document. So the results of the discussion appeared as the Australian-New Zealand Agreement, dated 21st January 1944.[1]

By the agreement the two Governments pledged themselves to exchange information, to seek to reach a common view and the "maximum degree of unity" in the presentation of it, to adopt expeditious and continuous means of consultation, and to act together in matters of common concern in the South-West and South Pacific areas.[2]

The two Governments also declared their vital interest in preparations for the armistices and post-armistice arrangements and claimed representation at the highest level in all armistice planning and executive bodies. They expressed their view that the peace settlements should wait until hostilities with all enemies were concluded. The supporting documents show that they accepted as a reality that Germany would be defeated first but they did not want the European Allies to divert their attention to negotiating peace with Germany before the war in the Pacific had ended. They believed that a global war should be followed by a global peace and thought that a piecemeal negotiation of peace would prejudice the chance of a sound world settlement. As part of the preparations for their participation, "Post Hostilities Planning Committees" would be set up in each country, and their work would be coordinated. They committed themselves to seek agreement with each other on the terms of any armistice.

The two Governments agreed that, within the framework of a general system of world security, a regional zone of defence comprising the South-West and South Pacific areas, and based on Australia and New Zealand, should be established. In this connection one of the documents prepared for the conference was a report by the Australian Defence Committee which, perhaps understandably in a document prepared by military advisers in wartime, shows a limited awareness of what Governments meant when they talked about security in the post-war world. Curtin, who was Minister for Defence as well as Prime Minister, broadened the approach in a

[9] *Conference of Australian and New Zealand Ministers held at Canberra, 17 to 21 January, 1944—Proceedings.* Parliamentary Papers 1944, No. 1102.

[1] *Agreement for Mutual Collaboration Between Australia and New Zealand, dated Canberra, 21st January 1944.*

[2] In using these terms, the Governments would appear to have had in mind the wartime division into a South Pacific command (with which New Zealand was associated) and a South-West Pacific command (with which Australia was associated) but it is doubtful whether there was any intention of setting precise geographical limitations in matters of common concern.

statement he made to the conference, saying that security would rest on three safeguards—national defence, Empire cooperation and the system of collective security "organised on a world and regional basis". The New Zealand Prime Minister widened the approach still further by linking a system of world security to a world system for the preservation of peace. While in accord with the idea of "regional defence" and, by implication, the idea of regional security as part of world security, Fraser stressed that he had considerable doubts "as to the practicability of regional bodies for the preservation of world peace". Piecemeal preservation of peace was not a practicable proposition in his view and he favoured a world organisation in which Australia and New Zealand could express their viewpoint on world problems, rather than one confined to the region in which they were geographically situated.[3]

The two Governments stated it as "a matter of cardinal importance" that they should both be associated "not only in the membership but also in the planning and establishment" of the general international organisation referred to in the Moscow Declaration. The Notes before the conference indicated that the United States was proposing to invite forthwith the adherence of other United Nations to Article IV of the Moscow Declaration (which referred to the world organisation) but that the United Kingdom Government view was that there should be preliminary exchanges of views between the original parties to the Declaration so as to elaborate the objectives. Australia favoured the United States view as it would mean an earlier association of all governments concerned in the security system. Australia was not entirely happy that the original declaration had been limited to "four (or three)" powers, and to confine preliminary exchanges to them would "probably result in the submission to Australia and New Zealand of a more or less cut-and-dried plan in which the two Governments had had either no voice at all or only a small time permitted for adherence".[4] Clause 14 of the agreement, by claiming association in planning and establishment, was a modified acceptance of this view. In practice, as will be seen below, the Great Powers proceeded to prepare the first draft of the Charter of the United Nations.

In Article V of the Moscow Declaration the four Powers had undertaken that, pending the inauguration of a system of general security, they would consult with one another and with other members of the United Nations with a view to joint action on behalf of the community of nations. The Australian notes on the agenda translated this into "policing arrangements" and argued that Australia and New Zealand should not await the implied invitation to consult but should establish forthwith their interest in the arrangements contemplated. The agreement stated that "it would be proper for Australia and New Zealand to assume full responsibility for policing or sharing in policing such areas in the South-West and South Pacific as may from time to time be agreed upon".

The last clause in the section of the agreement headed "Security and

[3] See Proceedings, pp. 20-2, 25-6 and 27.
[4] Proceedings, p. 16.

Defence" was also a public statement on matters about which there might be doubts. It seemed that disposal of wartime installations was under consideration by the United Kingdom Government on the service level. The Notes on the Agenda, however, stated that constructions by the United States afforded not "the slightest juridical basis for territorial claims". The only consideration in Mutual Aid arrangements had been an acknowledgment to enter into negotiations for improved economic conditions, and reciprocal lend-lease further "negates the argument". Accordingly the two governments accepted "as a recognised principle of international practice that the construction and use, in time of war, by any power, of naval, military or air installations, in any territory under the sovereignty or control of another power, does not, in itself, afford any basis for territorial claims or rights of sovereignty or control after the conclusion of hostilities".[5]

The main statement on civil aviation concerned the establishment of an International Air Transport Authority which would have control and ownership of international air trunk routes under an international agreement, but in the event of failure to achieve this the two governments supported air trunk routes controlled by governments of the British Commonwealth under government ownership.

The Australian view as indicated in the Notes on the Agenda about the future of Pacific islands and territories included a suggestion that Australia should take over the administration of the British Solomon Islands from the United Kingdom, and should share the responsibility, or undertake alone, the responsibility for the New Hebrides; and that Australia and New Zealand should not agree to the establishment of a condominium with the United States in any of New Ireland, New Britain, the Solomons, New Caledonia or New Hebrides; and that in any case Australia and New Zealand should be consulted about any condominium over any other group. In response to Evatt's case for Australian administration of the British Solomons, Fraser said it was principally a matter between Australia and Great Britain. New Zealand would not oppose it. Similarly the administration of the New Hebrides was a matter for mutual arrangement, but New Zealand "wished to make it clear that it wanted Britain to remain in the South Pacific. It would not dream of seeking a change of British rule in Fiji."[6]

The Notes on the Agenda had stressed the failure to consult Australia about the Cairo Declaration "although it vitally affected the distribution of power in the Pacific". "Positions of great importance were given away for no consideration and without any special regard for the interests of unrepresented countries like Australia and New Zealand.[7]

The result of the discussion was expressed in the agreement as Clauses 26 and 27.

[5] Proceedings, p. 28—Clause 16 of Agreement. Although the incidents do not come within the scope of this volume, the concern expressed at this time is relevant to the attitude taken by Evatt to the application by the United States to the Security Council for a strategic trusteeship over certain Pacific islands and his attitude in the controversial question of the American installations on Manus Island.

[6] Proceedings, p. 12.

[7] Proceedings, p. 12.

26. The two Governments declare that the interim administration and ultimate disposal of enemy territories in the Pacific is of vital importance to Australia and New Zealand and that any such disposal should be effected only with their agreement and as part of a general Pacific settlement.
27. The two Governments declare that no change in the sovereignty or system of control of any of the islands of the Pacific should be effected except as a result of an agreement to which they are parties or in the terms of which they have both concurred.[8]

On the "Welfare and Advancement of Native Peoples of the Pacific" the agreement declared that the "doctrine of 'trusteeship' . . . is applicable in broad principle to all colonial territories in the Pacific and elsewhere" and the two Governments should promote establishment of a South Seas Regional Commission. This would have advisory powers (the adjective was inserted at the conference discussion) and would recommend arrangements for participation of natives in administration, arrangements for material development, for coordination of health, medical services and education; for native welfare and labour conditions; for collaboration in research; and for publication of periodical reviews of progress.

The possibility that the two countries' immigration policy would be challenged after the war prompted Clause 32, which affirmed support for "the accepted principle that every government has the right to control immigration and emigration in regard to all territories within its jurisdiction".

It was agreed that as soon as practicable Australia should take steps to call a conference of those with territorial interests in the South and South-West Pacific to discuss problems of security, post-war development and native welfare.

Finally "permanent machinery" for cooperation and collaboration was agreed to and certain procedures accepted. The two Governments also agreed on certain objectives of their collaboration in defence, external policy, commerce, full employment and social security and improving the welfare of native peoples in the Pacific. They expressed their desire that other Governments with territories in the Pacific would adhere to these objectives.

The agreement committed the two Governments to work together and defined a number of the immediate objectives in which they had a common interest. It also had a good deal of the character of a declaration of what Australia and New Zealand thought important and what they would try to do—a sort of Pacific counterpart to the Big Power declarations by which parts of their own declaration had been provoked. In particular it was a declaration of what they would seek in the post-war settlement and in any international organisation, although it should be noted that, following the line of the Moscow Declaration, the purpose seen for the proposed international organisation at this stage was "peace and security".

At a meeting on 24th January 1944 the Cabinet approved the ratification

[8] Proceedings, p. 29.

of the agreement signed on the 21st.[9] The agreement was ratified by the New Zealand Government on 1st February.[1]

In Parliament on the 9th Spender asked if the agreement, which was to be tabled, was for ratification by the House, and if not why was Parliament not given an opportunity of discussing "such far-reaching issues as are contained in the agreement". Evatt next day devoted the first part of his speech on the agreement to the legal position. Though not called a treaty it was in that category, and the treaty-making power resided with the King, and his action was taken on the advice of Ministers. "Broadly speaking, parliamentary action is required for any treaty which lays a pecuniary charge upon the people or which alters the law of the land." The present agreement did neither of these things, nor did it affect private rights of citizens. "It really is an arrangement between the two Governments as to how an important part of their foreign and external relationships shall be conducted."[2] Despite a plea to revive it,[3] the debate on the agreement in the House of Representatives lapsed, but pressure of legislation was less in the Senate and there was some discussion of it there. Opposition comment referred mainly to Labour's retreat from isolationism and in particular Curtin's continuing emphasis on the importance of collaboration within the British Commonwealth of Nations.[4]

The Australian and New Zealand Governments had not formally told other interested governments about their intentions and were a little slow in informing them about the results of the discussion. This would appear to have been due to oversight or preoccupation with their own business and not to calculation. Indeed, their inattention to remote capitals was the same as the conduct of Britain and America that had so often aroused the complaints of Evatt and occasionally those of Curtin. The position of Britain was much the same as that of Australia on other occasions, for the British High Commissioner in Canberra was aware of what was going on and had copies of the agreement as soon as it was signed and presumably used his own initiative in reporting. The formal communication between governments did not come until the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers despatched a joint telegram to London on 25th January. This telegram recapitulated the main points in the agreement and elaborated certain points. They wanted representation at the highest level in all armistice arrangements, including those in Europe, because twice within a generation they had been involved in war as a result of hostilities arising in Europe. Commenting on what the agreement had said about the fourth and fifth articles of the Moscow Declaration they said specifically that they were "ready to assume responsibility for policing or sharing in policing such areas in the South-West and South Pacific as might from

[9] Full Cabinet Agendum 599. Evatt's press release of the 21st had begun: "In substance the two nations have declared a Pacific Charter of permanent collaboration and cooperation."

[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 71.

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, pp. 71-2. For a description of the circumstances in which delegates decided on a treaty see Hasluck, "Australia and the Formation of the United Nations" in the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol 40, Part III, 1954, p. 151.

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 719; Menzies asks question.

[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, pp. 190, 1306-1320, 1434.

time to time be agreed upon. They wished that Australia should have "full responsibility" for the policing of Portuguese Timor, Australian New Guinea and the Solomon Islands Protectorate and should "have a share in the responsibility" for policing the Netherlands Indies, particularly Java and Dutch New Guinea, and the New Hebrides. Responsibility for policing islands south of the Equator should be with the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand; and it was assumed that the United States would wish to "undertake a substantial share of responsibility" for policing islands north of the Equator. It was realised that regard would also have to be paid to the position of the United States south of the Equator because it already had a naval base at Tutuila.

At no point in the conference papers is it wholly clear what the Governments meant precisely by the term "policing", but the views they expressed on it are clearly related to the views they held on the necessity for a "defence screen" to protect them from invasion in the future and their belief that the arrangements to be made for the "control and defence" of the South-West and South Pacific would inevitably be affected by the interim arrangements made immediately after the reconquest of territories occupied by Japan. Curtin, in his speech to the conference on the defence item, had said: "The holding of the island screen means sea power, air power and garrisons with installation facilities, such as docks, aerodromes and defences. The local defence of the mainlands of Australia and New Zealand entails similar demands. The crux of the situation is the extent of the capacity of Australia and New Zealand to provide for the defence of the screen and, at the same time, for the local defence of their territories." They could not do this unaided. The Defence Committee's prepared paper, in seeking security of sea communications, security from invasion and security from long-range bombing, had talked of the need for strong forward bases for use by naval and air forces and adapted to effective land defence. It particularised the need for a main base at Darwin, an advanced base in Timor, "a strong naval and air base protected by an adequate garrison" in the Admiralty Islands (Manus) and bases in the possession of friendly powers in the Netherlands East Indies, the Solomon Islands-New Hebrides area, and Fiji, with access to facilities in New Caledonia. It is clear that the fear of invasion, the cutting of sea communications and long-range bombing raids were uppermost in military minds. In planning for the future they were thinking of the war in which they were still engaged, and they placed limited reliance either on collective security or on assistance from a foreign power. The enemy they foresaw was "some first-class Asiatic Power", although the political advisers could have reminded them that the principle of unconditional surrender of Japan had been accepted and armistice planning envisaged the disarming of the enemy, while they themselves had made all their assumptions on the belief that other Asian territories would be restored to the control of friendly European powers and that China was an ally. Nevertheless the political leaders sought to obtain responsibility for post-armistice policing of the region in order to increase their opportunities to apply this conception

of Australian and New Zealand defence. The desirable end to which this thinking led was "a permanent instrument of security" by establishing a "zone of defence" by agreement among the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Netherlands, France and Portugal.

This line of thought would appear to have been in keeping with a good deal of the Australian wartime advocacy of the claims of Australia for support as the outpost of European civilisation. Perhaps it would not be unfair to characterise Australian defence policy at this stage as expressing a "last bastion" philosophy—the last bastion of freedom, of civilisation, of European settlement, to be held against the pressure of Asian imperialism.[5]

The telegram to London also carried one step further the proposal in the agreement to hold a conference of interested governments to exchange views on security, post-war development and native welfare. It stated that it would not be practicable to hold the conference until some time after the forthcoming conference of British Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London and said that it was proposed to hold the conference at Canberra about the middle of the year. This was the proposal that caused chief concern to the United States Government.

On 3rd February[6] the United States Minister to Australia, Nelson T. Johnson, wrote to Curtin to say that he had read the text of the agreement and considered it understandable that the Australian and New Zealand Governments should wish to reach agreement among themselves on matters of common concern. However, he was frankly disturbed at the proposal of the two Governments to call an early conference of powers with territorial interests in the South and South-West Pacific. He had discussed this with the President and they had considerable doubts that it was yet the time to discuss the subjects proposed at a formal conference. The war in the Pacific had still to be won, and it had not yet reached a stage that would warrant the type of formalised discussion that appeared to be contemplated.

It was necessary, he added, to agree upon arrangements for a general international security system before attempting to deal with problems of regional security. Any attempt to deal with regional security in the South-West Pacific in advance of an agreement on a general security system might well give rise to efforts by other regional groups to make their own exclusive arrangements. The President and he had some fears that the formal conference of Powers that was contemplated might possibly do more harm than good to the united war effort, and bring into focus conflicting opinions on matters not requiring decision at this time. He hoped Curtin would take no steps towards calling such a conference until they had had an opportunity of discussing the matters personally.

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[5] In a wholly different context, Evatt, speaking of regional collaboration in the post-war world, spoke of Australia and New Zealand as "trustees in the South-West Pacific of not only Western civilisation but also British civilisation". *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol 16, No. 2, p. 31.

[6] Department of External Affairs file 44/630/5/1/11/7.

On 24th February[7] Evatt replied to Johnson. He said that it was agreed between Australia and New Zealand that the proposed conference should not take place before the Prime Ministers' talks in London. The Government welcomed a suggestion that Curtin should have an informal talk on the subject in Washington. "It is the opinion of the Australian Government," he wrote, "that the prosecution of the war especially in the Pacific would be aided by such frank and friendly exchange of views." He emphasised that the agreement spoke of regional security "within the framework of a general world plan of security". The Australian Government found it difficult to appreciate the suggestion that a conference in Australia of representatives of every Allied Power interested in the South Pacific area, without exception, could create reasonable grounds for objection or suspicion.

The Australian Government, Evatt continued, felt strongly that Australia and New Zealand were entitled to the fullest degree of preliminary consultation especially in relation to Pacific matters. At the recent Cairo Conference, however, decisions affecting the future of certain parts of the Pacific and vitally affecting both Australia and New Zealand were not only made but publicly announced without any previous reference to the Australian or New Zealand Governments. Further it was gradually becoming clear that certain Governments including the United States Government were tending to indicate their policy, though not publicly, on important phases of the post-war settlement in the Pacific. For instance, at the Pacific Council on 31st March 1943 the President said that he had discussed with Mr Eden the island territories in the Pacific, including the question of the Japanese mandated islands and Timor. Evatt then mentioned other occasions when the President had expressed opinions about the future of Pacific islands. It was the hope of the Australian Government that the proposed conference should be held about July 1944 and asked that the United States Government should give it active and vigorous support. The United States had frequently taken the initiative in matters of regional cooperation—for example, the Caribbean Conference.

The text of Evatt's proposed reply to the United States was sent to New Zealand whence the Australian High Commissioner, D'Alton, informed Evatt on 24th February that the New Zealand Government regarded it as "somewhat too forthright in tone to conciliate the Americans. There is a strong desire on the part of the New Zealand Government not to allow a situation to arise in which there is a deadlock between views of the United States Government on the one hand and ourselves and New Zealand on the other." He added that the Netherlands Consul-General had said that the Netherlands would not participate unless the United States approved.

Thus it was made very clear that the proposed general conference could not yet be held. On 8th September in the course of a long statement in Parliament on external affairs Evatt said that representatives of

[7] Department of External Affairs file 44/630/5/1/11/7.

Australia and New Zealand would soon attend a second conference as contemplated by the agreement but that "owing to the rapid momentum of the European war situation it had not yet been found practicable" to hold a Western Pacific international conference. He hoped that such a conference would be possible after the conference with New Zealand and as soon as the European situation was sufficiently clarified.

Towards the end of 1943 there had been questions in the House about the likelihood of a Prime Ministers' conference in London, and speculation in the press. On 6th March 1944 Curtin told the War Cabinet that he intended to go to England in April, and members "expressed general agreement with the P.M.'s visit" after discussing the Parliamentary programme (especially the Constitution Alteration (Post-War Reconstruction) Bill) and the need to obtain supply for the early months of the next financial year.

He and his party[8] arrived by ship in San Francisco on 19th April and travelled immediately to Washington, where he had talks with Roosevelt, and then journeyed to London.

The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference opened in London on 1st May. The subjects fell into two main groups:

(*a*) The conduct of the war in order that the Governments could review their war efforts in relation to the strategic plans, and

(*b*) Post-war problems, both Empire and international.

The former will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Just before the conference opened the United Kingdom Government circulated a series of memoranda on the scope and nature of an international organisation, guarantees and the pacific settlement of disputes, security, coordination of economic and political international machinery, and method and procedure for establishing a world organisation. The Foreign Secretary explained that the United States wished to have informal and exploratory discussions of these problems in June between representatives of the United Kingdom, United States and Russia and the United Kingdom was anxious to have the agreement of other British Commonwealth Governments that the papers were on the right lines as a basis for informal discussions.

Curtin said that he intended to transmit the memoranda to his Government for its comments and was agreeable to discussions proceeding on the lines suggested. In view of the previous failure to secure the support of the United States for the League of Nations they should go to "extreme lengths" to secure their support for the new organisation.

The Colonial Secretary, Stanley, opening discussion of colonial questions, said that the mandates system was out of date. It laid down negative principles. Large-scale development of colonial areas was generally

[8] Prime Minister (and Mrs Curtin), General Sir Thomas Blamey, Sir Frederick Shedden, F. A. McLaughlin (PM's private secretary), D. K. Rodgers (press secretary), Major D. H. Dwyer (Blamey's assistant), S. Landau (personal assistant to Shedden). In Blamey's absence he delegated powers to General Northcott. Advisory War Council Minute 1342, 20 Apr 1944.

beyond the resources of a colonial territory and a parent power was naturally reluctant to spend large sums on development without a guarantee of permanent sovereignty. He considered the establishment of regional bodies as the most important development contemplated in this field. These would be an effective answer to proposals for some form of international control. Any central international organisation would contain representatives of Powers with no colonial experience and, in any case, control by such an organisation could only be theoretical and superficial. Provision for third-party opinion would best be made by bringing into association regional commissioners of Powers which, although they did not possess territories in the area, were concerned because of strategic, economic or other interests.

In reply to a question by Curtin, Stanley said that he contemplated a regional commission in the South Pacific which would include New Guinea, the New Hebrides and Dutch New Guinea. He regarded Australia as the principal parent state in the area.

Curtin said that Australia contemplated two areas for regional colonial commissions in the areas adjacent to Australia. One might include South-East Asia and the Netherlands East Indies and the other might be the one delimited in the Australia-New Zealand agreement. One of the primary objectives should be the welfare and social development of the inhabitants. He remarked that the inhabitants of New Guinea had proved themselves loyal, partly, no doubt, a result of the excellent foundations of administration laid down by Sir Hubert Murray.[9] But his information was that in the Dutch and Portuguese territories the Japanese had received a certain amount of aid from the inhabitants.

Curtin mentioned the opinion voiced in the United States that that country should retain territories regained at the cost of American lives. While he welcomed "the intrusion of American influence" between Australia and Japan, Australia and, he thought, New Zealand did not want this to occur at the expense of British territory but at the expense of the Japanese and if need be the Dutch and French. He was not altogether happy about large colonial territories remaining the responsibility of weak parent states which had not the resources to provide adequately for defence. If the Japanese built up their strength again the position would become dangerous and for that reason he hoped that the United States could be persuaded to undertake definite defence commitments abutting on Malaya.

Churchill said that the future of the islands Curtin referred to was bound up with questions of strategic security. He contemplated that all islands removed from their original possessors would pass under the authority of the United Nations; some might be held by the United States in trust for the United Nations.

In the course of later discussion, Curtin disagreed with the opinion of Fraser that it was essential that reports on colonial administration should be submitted to and discussed by "some international body".

[9] Hon Sir Hubert Murray, KCMG. Lieut-Governor of Papua 1908-1940. B. Sydney, 29 Dec 1861. Died 27 Feb 1940.

Although it is not explicitly stated in the official record of the meeting that Curtin endorsed the views expressed by Stanley, it might be reasonably inferred from the record that he was in general accord with their purpose. His own report sent back to Canberra, after referring to the views he had expressed on security, said: "Subject to these considerations I was in agreement with the general principles enunciated by the Colonial Secretary." Curtin's main concern when in London would appear to have been a fear that the future administration of colonial territories might be such as to leave them as stepping stones for a future aggressor. While Fraser revealed interest in international trusteeship, Curtin did not.

In discussion of the International Monetary Fund and commercial policy generally the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the fund should not operate in the transitional period. The plan could not be regarded as complete unless supplemented by a scheme for an International Bank which would provide funds for reconstruction. Secondly, if the plan was adopted the full obligation under it which would fall on the United Kingdom could only be undertaken gradually.

Curtin, according to the report he sent back to Canberra, said to the meeting that Australia favoured cooperation for the purpose of expanding trade and commerce and overcoming the instability of exchanges. But, unless agreement was first reached between the United States and the United Kingdom any scheme would be doomed to failure. More than an outline of principles would be needed. Faith without works was no good. He felt grave doubts whether the United States could make a drastic reduction of their high tariffs. Any scheme would have to be sponsored in the first place by the Great Powers. Australia could not be expected to "go out as a pioneer". He also pointed out that the real and immediate problem was in the transition from war to peace. Rehabilitation was more important and more urgent than the long-term problem and it was essential to get something working without delay for the transitional period. At a later stage he remarked that rehabilitation was more important than "getting the normal pre-war machine a little better oiled than it was".

For reasons such as these Curtin foresaw domestic political difficulty in the acceptance of a scheme, particularly one "with intricate terminologies beyond the grasp of the man in the street".

The matter was also related, he said, to the issue of Imperial preference, and Australia was certainly not going to throw away this advantage "for any doubtful Utopia of some world agreement". Some countries were inclined to press for declarations of high policy on the basis of the open door in every country they might wish to exploit. But the Australian Government had to build up its secondary industries and, indeed, if it had not done so, could not have provided the steel and iron and many other goods which had been so essential to the conduct of the war and could have found herself defenceless at a critical moment. Australia might have to adopt whatever policies concerning tariffs, subsidies or the like as would be helpful in consolidating her industrial capacity. Moreover, Australia wanted to see a large increase in her population.

Full employment and rehabilitation was the "pedestal" on which a good monetary policy must be worked out. In face of unemployment a country would have to take steps on its own; and experience had shown that, in the absence of any better scheme, the action countries were disposed to take was to put a penalty on imports and to seek bi-lateral marketing arrangements.

Curtin ended by stressing that before the technical experts could go further there had to be political decisions by governments on the high principles involved. Australia would be ready to assist in framing such political decisions.

Churchill said that he had brought to the notice of his Cabinet the following fundamental points which seemed to him to stand out in discussions of Article VII of the Mutual Aid Agreement. There should be no fettering of their country to a gold standard, no abandonment of Imperial preference except in the presence of a vast scheme for reducing trade barriers with the United States taking the lead, no agreement destructive of the *Wheat Act* of 1932, no policy of artificial dearness or scarcity of basic foods as a result of tariffs or quotas.

In the course of a discussion of civil aviation the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Beaverbrook, said that discussions with the United States had shown that they would not accept any plan for international control of air services or international operation of trunk routes. Beaverbrook suggested that the next step should be to arrange international discussions to get some form of international control. At the same time plans should be prepared for the establishment of a British Commonwealth air route.

Curtin concurred in the idea of having a British Commonwealth line. The Australian Government thought there should be two routes. They wished to see British air interests in the Pacific expanded, and were also anxious to see a British route from Australia to Great Britain, possibly through Darwin.

The conference agreed that the next steps should be to try by international discussions to obtain an agreement for a substantial measure of international control of civil aviation and to arrange discussions between experts about plans for British Commonwealth and Empire air routes.

In the course of discussion of shipping the conference agreed to a proposal by the Minister for Transport for inter-governmental talks about a plan for control of all ships as long as was necessary to meet the United Nations' requirements in an orderly fashion.

Curtin said that his Government placed great importance on Australia's maintenance of an adequate merchant navy and adequate shipbuilding and ship repairing industries.

The Secretary of State for the Dominions said that he hoped that the Dominions would accept in principle the idea of cooperating in some form of government assistance to migration of demobilised service personnel from the United Kingdom. They might be willing to agree that possible arrangements should be examined by officials with a view to their subsequent consideration by the Governments.

Curtin agreed with this procedure and tabled a statement of views approved by the Australian Government on British migration, child migration and migration from Malta.

At this stage, the Australian Cabinet consideration of post-war immigration policy would appear not to have advanced beyond a response to an inquiry made by the Dominions Office in April concerning British problems of demobilisation and post-war adjustment.[1]

The Australian Government agreed that British ex-servicemen and women demobilised in Australia with the intention of remaining there should retain the right to be repatriated, at the expense of the United Kingdom Government, after demobilisation or, alternatively, to have their dependants in the United Kingdom provided with passages to Australia on the same basis as parallel classes of individuals.

Fraser said that New Zealand was at present unable to consider plans for large-scale immigration; he emphasised the importance of giving priority to the re-settling of New Zealand ex-servicemen.

In the discussion of foreign policy the Foreign Secretary, Eden, said that the cardinal feature had been to avoid commitments or decisions during the war that might at the peace table prove embarrassing for the future of the world. No commitment, secret or other, had been contracted with anyone.

The European Advisory Commission on which Britain, the United States and Russia were represented had so far concerned itself, said a Foreign Office note presented to the conference, with the terms of surrender for Germany. It had been disappointing that the commission had not developed as the Foreign Office had hoped, into a forum for the discussion of European problems.

In the course of discussion of international Communism Curtin spoke with a cautious realism that contrasted with some of the more optimistic views of his own Foreign Minister. He said that if the Communist Party could produce personalities who would attract public attention and support as the Nazis had done they might well appeal to oppressed and discontented elements. He had in mind a strong resurgence of Russian nationalism with the Communist Party acting in other countries as Russian diplomatic agents, as it were. The British Commonwealth should aim at the establishment as soon as possible of some kind of stable government in the countries which had been overrun. All post-war adjustments would primarily depend on how far we could succeed in arrangements with Russia and how far Russia in fact sincerely intended to collaborate. They should not be deterred from forming a world organisation if Russia was ready to collaborate, merely because they disliked a particular form of government. However the leaders whom in various countries they found it wise to support in time of war were not necessarily the leaders for times of peace.

Churchill said that the history of the Communist movement in the

[1] See pp. 521-2 below for subsequent Cabinet discussions.

war was a dispiriting one of constant change of policy. It was understandable that there was no relationship between the Labour Party in Great Britain and the Communists. The inevitable and deep-seated suspicions which the British working class entertained of them would be difficult to eradicate.[2]

The subjects discussed at the meeting of Prime Ministers had covered a very wide range, including the post-war settlement, colonial questions, the state of foreign affairs, economic policy, shipping, migration and post-war employment plans as well as the war situation. Curtin's main interest and his chief personal contributions were in respect of the future conduct of the war against Japan and the ideas which he had been turning over for some time regarding improvements in the machinery for Empire cooperation. These were questions which he had in his own head and they were also subjects on which he had provided himself with expert advisers in the persons of Shedden and Blamey. As regards colonial policy and the post-war settlement he had for guidance the conclusions which had been reached at the Australia-New Zealand conference in January 1944, but neither in respect of these questions nor the economic and technical questions was his delegation as fully served as it might have been either with officials expert in these fields or with documents. At some points it would appear that he had not himself fully accepted the ideas which were current in administration at Canberra.

The meeting was not for Curtin an invigorating experience. He worked dutifully and impressed others with his genuineness and devotion to Australia's interests, but he found little joy or inspiration in it and the response to his own attempt to improve Commonwealth cooperation was discouraging. On the homeward way he was a tired, overworked and anxious man, longing to get back to Australia. He and his party arrived in Brisbane on 26th June.

By this time there had been a considerable progress in Australian departmental activity on post-war matters. Departments were at work on armistice terms, post-armistice arrangements, war crimes, policies in respect of particular territories, post-war relief and rehabilitation, security and the suggested new world organisation, refugees, civil administration of reoccupied territories, reparations, the future of colonies, and some of the particular problems which would arise in the peace-settlements (e.g. the future of treaties and conventions abrogated or suspended by the war) and the formation of various specialised international agencies. Information and preliminary views on these subjects were being exchanged with other friendly governments. This work was centred in the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Defence. Collaboration at the official level with officers of other Allied Governments was also growing.

In August, in Washington, the representatives of the Great Powers

[2] Advisory War Council file "Conference of Prime Ministers" which covers cables 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 46, between 8 and 29 May 1944, reproduced to Advisory War Council Minute 1401, 5 Jul, as Agendum 16/1944.

commenced the meetings which led to the production in October of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals for the establishment of a general international organisation for the maintenance of peace and security. Australian officials had received information of the progress of this work and had worked on it. In a speech to Parliament on 8th September, before the Dumbarton Oaks draft had been published, Evatt was able to declare Australian views on a number of points. It was desirable, he said, that the establishment of the permanent machinery of the United Nations should precede the final peace settlements with Japan and Germany, for there would be a better prospect of enduring settlements if they were made against the background and subject to the operation of an established world system of security rather than if they were made immediately after the surrender of the enemy.

The first problem was security against aggression. There should be orderly procedures by which any dispute which might lead to war could be "adjusted promptly" and by which any threat of force could be met by the organisation. The organisation must have control of sufficient force either to prevent or to make a quick end to any armed conflict. He said that each of the three great powers must renounce war as an instrument of national policy, a means must be found for composing amicably any differences among the Big Three and that the "three great powers must act unitedly". The leading powers should pay due regard to the doctrine of equality of States. They should allow fair representation to smaller powers on any world organisation. The executive authority should be constituted with adequate representation of smaller powers, and so as to ensure that no distinct region of the globe and no important group of nations were left unrepresented on it. A place should be found for regional groups of powers subject to the world organisation.

Then he stressed that "peace is not merely the absence of war". The two supreme objectives were security from aggression and freedom from want. He reviewed the progress made in the creation of international economic organisations. All these should be brought into the overall plan for international collaboration. An international agreement concerning employment was basic to such an overall plan.

This speech did not mean that Evatt had built up independently a wealth of ideas that forestalled the Dumbarton Oaks draft. He was using the currency of international discussion which had come to the Government through the association of its advisers with the advisers of other governments. He annexed to his speech a comprehensive selection of documents on the post-war settlement and proposed world organisation.[3]

In the same speech he went on to talk about the concern of the whole world in a European peace settlement which would produce a stable, peaceful and prosperous Europe which would no longer be a breeding ground of conflict. He wanted a "resurgence of democracy", removal of all active Fascist elements in defeated enemy countries and trial of war

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 179, pp. 601-28.

criminals. Immediately after surrender Germany must be occupied, disarmed and controlled but ultimately Germany must be "integrated again with the rest of Europe". He hoped for the maximum degree of European unity.

Regarding the Pacific, he had moved towards a plainer acceptance of United States as well as British activity. He welcomed a speech by Roosevelt at Puget Sound on 12th August, interpreting it as an indication of American interest over a wide region of the Pacific in future security and said: "Both in the development of the Pacific region and in its security, full British and United States participation will be absolutely essential."

When the Dumbarton Oaks draft was published in early October arrangements were already in train for the holding of the first of the regular Ministerial meetings provided for in the Australia-New Zealand Agreement and it was already planned that one of the principal items for discussion would be the Great Power proposals for a General International Organisation. The meeting took place in Wellington from 1st to 6th November, Fraser, Nash and Jones (Minister of Defence) attending for New Zealand and Forde and Evatt for Australia. The only advisers on the Australian side were from the Department of External Affairs.

There had been liaison at the official level between Canberra and Wellington and a good deal of groundwork had been done in preparation for the meeting. The results of the discussion were set out formally in a statement of conclusions and in a covering note initialled by Fraser and Forde it was stated that the Conference accepted these conclusions.[4] In due course the Australian Cabinet approved the conclusions on the 10th and the New Zealand Cabinet did so on the 16th.

The opening section of the conclusions dealt with the General International Organisation. Most of the paragraphs in the statement were in accord with and indicated general support for the Dumbarton Oaks draft, but some expressed certain principles more strongly and these paragraphs are a significant guide to Australian and New Zealand attitudes at the San Francisco Conference which prepared the Charter of the United Nations. For example, paragraph 4 said:

> It should be a positive principle of the Organisation, openly declared and binding upon all members, that the territorial integrity and political independence of members should be preserved against change by force or threat of force from another power. Provision should be made by the Organisation for facilitating the orderly change of situations, the continuance of which might endanger the peace of the world.

Paragraph 7 said:

> The success of such an organisation will depend upon the leadership of the Greater Powers, but it is essential that all members should actively participate in the general control and direction of its affairs. To this end, the powers and functions of the Assembly should be such as to enable it at any of its meetings to deal with

[4] Identified in the Conference papers as ANZ(2), No. 50.

any matter within the sphere of action of the Organisation, subject only to the executive powers of the Security Council in regard to the settlement of disputes and the action to be taken against an aggressor.

These two paragraphs isolate at this early stage some of the principal areas for subsequent argument—the guarantee of the security of small states, provision for peaceful change, and the powers of the General Assembly.

Another paragraph asked that the essential principles of both the Atlantic Charter and the Philadelphia Declaration should be embodied in the Charter of the prospective Organisation. The Dumbarton Oaks draft had only stated those principles of sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, peaceful settlement and enforcement action which were considered essential for an organisation for collective security.

Stating a doctrine which Australia was later to apply in argument when a member of the Security Council, another paragraph said that there should be "the maximum employment of the International Court of Justice for the ascertainment of facts which may be in dispute".

The only startling paragraph was the eleventh:

Powers responsible for dependent territories should accept the principle of trusteeship, already applicable in the case of mandated territories. In such dependent territories the purpose of the trust is the welfare and advancement of the native peoples. Colonial Powers should undertake to make regular reports to an international body analogous to the Permanent Mandates Commission set up within the framework of the General Organisation. This body should be empowered to publish reports of its deliberations and to inspect dependent territories.

There was nothing in the Dumbarton Oaks draft about colonial territories or trusteeship but this paragraph was a practical application of Clauses 28 to 31 of the Australia-New Zealand Agreement. Strangely, Evatt made only vague and guarded references to the matter in his public statements but Fraser expanded on it in his statement after the meeting and gave a specific undertaking that New Zealand would itself subscribe to a trusteeship system.[5]

The Australian Government soon learnt that there had been a sharp reaction in London to this paragraph of the conclusions. On 10th November Bruce cabled Curtin that the statement that there should be a body analogous to the Permanent Mandates Commission ". . . empowered to publish reports . . . and to inspect dependent territories" had "fairly put the cat among the pigeons". In some quarters, Bruce said, particularly those directly concerned with colonial problems, the reactions were very strong. The proposal had thrown out of gear plans being formulated in London. After the Prime Ministers' talks in London the United Kingdom had begun working on the idea of regional cooperation for the social and economic progress of colonial areas and were ready to submit proposals to the Dominions. The United Kingdom Government was bewildered at the public declaration by Australia and New Zealand in favour of the

[5] See *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol 15, No. 11, p. 330.

mandates system because at the Prime Ministers' meeting it seemed that Australia at all events agreed with the United Kingdom about the defects of the mandates system.

"The electricity in the atmosphere," he added, "has also been increased by the fact, which the U.K. do not hesitate to rub into me, that the decision was made without prior consultation although, as they put it, the matter was not urgent and Australia and New Zealand were aware that the United Kingdom were not in agreement with the views expressed."

If the Australian Government had changed its views, Bruce said, nothing could be done, but if they still held the views expressed in England would it be possible quietly to drop the part of the public statement dealing with the mandates system.[6]

A few days later the Dominions Office cabled both the Australian and New Zealand Governments in similar vein. They felt "surprise and concern" at the proposal for "an international supervisory body with power to visit dependent territories and publish reports of its deliberations". As Australia and New Zealand would be aware from the discussions at the Prime Ministers' meeting, the United Kingdom Government held very strongly the view that such control by a central international body would be contrary to the interests both of the dependent peoples and the parent nations, and particularly of the British Empire. They feared that the Australia-New Zealand statement might lead to serious difficulty and embarrassment in discussions with the United States Government. It might become necessary for the United Kingdom Government to make a public statement of its own attitude.[7]

This message was received on the 15th and next day Evatt cabled Fraser that he was "surprised and indignant" at the Dominions Office telegram and thought that a strong reply was called for; he would submit a draft to Fraser before sending it. Curtin was still in hospital, he said, and would not resume duty before January.

The draft of a "strong reply" prepared for Evatt was eventually made considerably milder. The telegram finally sent on the 19th said that Australian policy on colonial mandates had been consistent. At the Prime Ministers' conference in London Curtin had "simply dissented from one particular suggestion relating to the furnishing of reports". There had not been the slightest disclaimer of the particular principles of trusteeship outlined both in the Australia-New Zealand Agreement and Australia's confidential communications to the British Government. The Dominions Office telegram attributed to Australia a proposal for international control of colonies, whereas Australia had been careful to use the term "supervision", as "indicating a very special function interfering in no way with the sovereignty and control by the parent states". Australia had not been prejudiced by the annual review of New Guinea by the Permanent Mandates Commission; on the contrary this was found to be advantageous

[6] Bruce to Curtin, 10 Nov 1944, received 13 Nov, No. 157A; External Affairs file 44/630/5/1/11/22.
[7] Dominions Office to Australia and New Zealand (Nos. 325 and 265), 14 Nov, received 15 Nov.

to Australia and to the native peoples. The telegram went on to discuss trusteeship and its advantages. Evatt concluded by saying that no doubt they would in due course hear the Dominions Office's comments on "other more urgent matters discussed at Wellington".[8]

The Dominions Office replied in a fairly conciliatory way. It had not thought to question the right of the Australian and New Zealand Governments to make declarations on colonial as on other aspects of public policy, but was "seriously perturbed as to the practical results which were likely to flow from the procedure that had been adopted".[9]

Among the other matters discussed at Wellington and described by Evatt as "more urgent" were armistice arrangements. The two governments declared that though "in the interests of solidarity of the United Nations" they had felt obliged to acquiesce in their exclusion from armistice arrangements in Europe they could not acquiesce to any similar situation in the Pacific and Far East. They would take the strongest possible action to ensure that they were consulted in the drafting of armistices with Japan and Thailand, that they were represented directly at the conclusion of the armistices and that they had the right of participating in armistice control arrangements. They approved a New Zealand proposal that the Australian Minister for External Affairs should visit America and England to make personal representations on the matter.

It was agreed that Evatt should also discuss in London and Washington the proposal to convene the conference of nations with interests in the Pacific which had been decided on in Canberra in January.

The conference agreed that immediate steps should be taken to establish the South Seas Regional Commission. It should comprise the Commission proper, consisting of representatives of the governments and administrations in the Region; a secretariat; and "research and functional bodies" established by the member governments on the advice of the Commission. A South Seas Conference should be held regularly. The two governments should immediately approach the United Kingdom Government about

[8] To Dominions Office, 19 Nov.

[9] This is one point at which the author, having been officially associated with these events, has to avow frankly that he holds an opinion, based on his own observation of events, that, at this stage in the development of Australian policy, the views advanced by a small group of departmental officers got ahead of deliberate Ministerial decisions. In London, Curtin had not been fully aware of these departmental views and in Wellington Evatt had accepted them too easily. In both cases Ministers had on their minds other matters that they considered were more important than the colonial question. In London, Curtin's preoccupation was with security. In Wellington, Evatt's preoccupation was with armistice arrangements and Australian participation in the peace settlement. He was indisposed during the Wellington meeting and was not present at any of the working sessions where the draft of the conclusions was prepared with endorsement by Fraser from New Zealand but without any Ministerial endorsement at that stage from the Australian side. This was one of those occasions on which departmental officers not only took a significant part in shaping a major policy but also moved to have it publicly declared without any formal approval having been given by Cabinet. Lest it be thought that the author is claiming any personal credit, it should be made plain that the officer chiefly concerned was W. D. Forsyth, who had been brought into the Department of External Affairs as a "research officer" direct from close association in Melbourne with a group of members of the Australian Institute of International Affairs who had engaged in studies on colonial questions. Another major force in shaping this declaration at Wellington was the New Zealand delegation and the New Zealand Prime Minister, Fraser, who was more advanced in his thinking on post-war colonial questions than either Curtin or Evatt. Evatt's own interest in colonial trusteeship warmed up as the time of the San Francisco Conference approached and he was attracted to it as an issue to be fought. Having regard to some claims that have been made, it should be added that, up to the end of 1945, no evidence has been found by the author that either the Minister (Ward) or Department of External Territories or the Army Directorate of Research had any significant part in shaping Australian post-war colonial policy.

the establishment of the commission. The native people should be enabled to take part in the work of the commission and its agencies.[1]

Under the heading "Welfare Relations" the conference reaffirmed the two governments' "common point of view" on certain problems of economics and welfare. The subscribing countries should adopt policies aimed at full employment. They would advocate and support in the transition period immediately after the war such forms of "economic collaboration" as would make it unnecessary for countries to adopt policies of "aggressive economic nationalism". In any agreements for the longer term it would be necessary for countries which were not fully developed or which were highly dependent on a narrow range of exports to be able to use such economic measures as import selection, exchange control, state trading, and British Commonwealth preferences where necessary to ensure "continued stability". They should also be able under any agreement to develop and diversify their industries. All agreements affecting Australia and New Zealand should take into special account the dislocations caused by a total war effort. They declared that an employment conference to produce an international agreement on employment should take precedence over all other international economic discussions.

Finally they listed a number of subjects for further discussion in the first instance by officials.

Meanwhile, attention had been given to many other aspects of post-war international cooperation. During the September to December 1944 period of meetings, Parliament passed legislation providing for Australian membership of the Food and Agriculture Organisation and of UNRRA and in February 1945 the Far Eastern Committee of UNRRA held a meeting at Lapstone (New South Wales). The United Nations War Crimes Commission, which was inaugurated in London in October 1942 had continued its work, Australia being represented first by Lord Atkin and after his death in June 1944 by Lord Wright, who was later elected chairman. In June 1943 the Government had appointed Sir William Webb as a commissioner to inquire into atrocities or breaches of the rules of warfare committed by the Japanese armed forces in New Guinea and Papua and his report had been placed before the War Crimes Commission in the United Kingdom.[2] Australia was also participating in the work of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees.

Australia had a share in the activities which led to the creation of UNESCO. In October 1942 under British initiative, a Conference of Allied Ministers of Education had been formed in London, largely with the object of rallying the European Governments in exile and combining their efforts to maintain on the cultural side the resistance of their people to the enemy. Australia was in touch with these efforts from their inception,

[1] No general conference of nations with interests in the Pacific was held. After the war a conference to serve the more limited objective of creating a regional commission was sponsored at Canberra by Australia and New Zealand and led to the establishment of the South Pacific Commission by an agreement signed on 6th February 1947 and ratified on 29th July 1948.

[2] See *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol 16, No. 1, pp. 1-3.

first through direct association with Britain and later and more formally by becoming one of an additional number of nations which sent observers to the Conference. During 1944 drafts of a constitution of a United Nations organisation were circulated for comment and eventually in November 1945 at a conference in London, Australia was one of the 44 nations who joined in founding the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

International civil aviation plans rose towards the point of decision in 1944. There had been Commonwealth conversations in Britain in 1943 by a committee of technical experts, and these had produced the Balfour Plan. This had also been the basis for a Canadian draft convention, but neither the British nor the Canadian plans favoured "internationalisation" as enunciated in the Australia-New Zealand Agreement. In April 1944 there were formal discussions between the United Kingdom and the United States, the Balfour Plan being accepted as a basis for discussion.

In June 1944 the Australian Minister in Washington and the Director-General of Civil Aviation had discussions with the United States and their report led the Prime Minister to recognise that there was little, if any, support overseas for the policy expressed in the Australia-New Zealand Agreement. He directed the drafting of a plan incorporating the principles of the second choice referred to in that agreement. This plan was:

(i) Internal air transport services in each Commonwealth country (including services to contiguous territories) to be operated as may be determined by the sovereign governments of those countries;

(ii) Services between Empire countries to be classified as
(*a*) strategical air services and air services of a prestige character,
(*b*) ordinary commercial air services,
both of which would carry passengers and freight.

It was suggested that "strategical" services be operated to limited schedules by a British Commonwealth Corporation wholly government-owned and formed by a partnership of Commonwealth countries. This plan was presented to London.

In the meantime, on 14th June the United States Civil Aeronautics Board, Washington, had issued a public statement that applications for licences from United States operators would be heard by the board in respect of a number of international routes. On 26th July the State Department invited other United Nations to submit statements of international routes each nation wished to operate. The Australian High Commissioner in London on 22nd August reported that the position appeared to be anything but satisfactory and it was difficult to avoid the impression that the United States had little enthusiasm for a worthwhile International Convention governing post-war civil aviation, but was hoping to conclude bilateral arrangements with individual nations and thus ensure for America a dominant position in post-war civil aviation. He urged agreement to a Dominions Office suggestion of 28th July that there should be a conference in London.

A submission to the Australian Cabinet summed up the position as follows: the principles of internationalisation stated in the declared Australian policy were not likely to be accepted as a common objective of the United Nations. A plan for services between British Commonwealth countries on the lines of the plan presented by Australia in London had not yet been submitted to all British Commonwealth countries, but the United Kingdom Government had asked that a conference be held in London on the expert level to consider it. The United States was apparently averse to the appointment of an international authority vested with powers other than to draw up a more or less technical convention governing safety standards and similar matters. Later the powers of such an authority might be increased but for a start it would exercise no authority over operation of routes and services or determination of schedules, all of which would be arrived at by bilateral agreements. Anglo-American rivalry was apparently inevitable in some degree. The submission continued:

> The British Commonwealth of Nations is honestly believed to have endeavoured to avoid any step which would generate rivalry but circumstances have been against them. On the other hand circumstances favour the United States by virtue of her strong position as an international air operator, her unquestionable command of suitable transport types of aircraft now and in the immediate post-war period, the opportunity afforded by the bilateral talks she has had with other nations and the infiltration of the United States airline operators themselves in many countries during the war. The United States can capitalise on all these things and is apparently bent on doing so.

The Cabinet approved recommendations for the restoration of an Empire service (Britain to Australia via the Mediterranean and India); the establishment of a service across the Pacific to Canada; the holding of a British Commonwealth Conference in London; and that all Empire nations should urge the United States to hold a United Nations conference to secure the greatest possible degree of understanding. New Zealand was asked for cooperation and support "as visualised in the Australia-New Zealand Agreement".[3]

Early in September, before the Empire conference was held, the United States had issued invitations to a conference on aviation. As a consequence Australia found itself represented at Empire talks in Montreal from 23rd to 27th October, at the American talks at Chicago beginning on 1st November, and at further Empire talks in London on 9th and 10th December. At a preliminary conference between Australia and New Zealand held in Wellington on 12th October, it was again agreed that the main objective of both Governments at Montreal and Chicago should be the international ownership and operation of international air transport services, but, in the event that they could not secure that main objective they should seek comprehensive international control of services on prescribed international routes, of rates and subsidies and international regulation of traffic rules, air safety and navigation aids.

[3] Full Cabinet Agendum 729 dated 29 Aug 1944, considered at meeting of 25 Sep 1944. The submission, from Civil Aviation, is the source of the preceding description of events.

A report by the Minister for Air, Drakeford, on the Chicago conference was before the Cabinet on 6th December. The broad course of the conference showed that, after general acceptance of proposals for a multilateral convention governing technical aviation standards, the clear issue between British Commonwealth and United States delegations was on the question of an international air traffic regulating authority. The United States at no time showed any inclination to accept any form of agreement establishing an international authority with executive powers. In the middle of November agreement had seemed possible on a limited basis of agreed regulation of frequency and fares, but further proposals put forward by the United States on 18th November were unacceptable to the United Kingdom and chances of agreement disappeared. Failing agreement the United States put forward proposals for acceptance of five freedoms of air:

> Right of . . . passage, right of stop for non-traffic purposes, right to set down passengers, mails and freight from aircraft's country of origin, right to pick up passengers, mails and freight for aircraft's country of origin, right to take on passengers, mails and freight destined for territory of any member state and right to put down passengers, mails and freight coming from any such territory.

Close discussion narrowed to international agreement for the first two, that is right of transit and right to land for non-traffic purposes. The Australian delegation had asked for immediate instructions and had been told to sign "for certification purposes only".[4]

Subsequently, after Drakeford had returned to Australia, the Prime Minister presented a report on the conference to the Cabinet and recommended that it should approve the action taken in signing the interim agreement on International Civil Aviation and that the Australian Minister at Washington be authorised to sign the International Air Services Transit Agreement on behalf of the Government. The interim agreement contained most of the provisions of the permanent convention on International Civil Aviation to be submitted at a later stage for ratification by the Government and to take the place of existing conventions; the Air Service Transit Agreement conferred on signatory States what were known as the first two freedoms of the air.[5]

At the same time the results of Empire talks on civil aviation were before the Cabinet. A Commonwealth Air Transport Council was formed to consist of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Newfoundland, Southern Rhodesia and the colonial empire; it was to keep under review progress and development of British Commonwealth civil air communications to serve as a medium for the exchange of views, and to consider and advise on such matters as the governments might desire to refer to the Council. Cabinet approved this, and approved also that in the operation of the United Kingdom-Australia service, via India, the Australian Government would stand firm on the decision that the service should not be operated by a joint corporation but should be continued as

[4] Full Cabinet Agendum 762 ex External Affairs, considered at meeting 6 Dec 1944.
[5] Full Cabinet Agendum 804, dated Melbourne 23 Jan 1945, considered at meeting 26 Feb 1945.

a parallel operation by selected United Kingdom and Australian operators. The Australian Government would join the New Zealand and United Kingdom Governments in forming a joint operating corporation for the trans-Pacific civil air service; standard clauses would be adopted for inclusion in any bilateral agreements negotiated with other countries.[6]

There had been developments in airline operations within Australia at the same time. An inter-departmental committee appointed by the War Cabinet presented its report on 23rd December 1943.[7] Another committee was appointed to examine their report and the matter then went to the Full Cabinet. They deferred a decision on 25th September 1944 but subsequently on 10th November the Cabinet approved the creation of a government-owned statutory corporation to conduct airline services in Australia.[8]

3—THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE

The Australian activity in world affairs came to its wartime climax at the United Nations Conference on International Organisation held at San Francisco from 25th April to 26th June 1945. The policies that had taken shape in Australian comment on the Moscow Declaration, at the Prime Ministers' meeting of May 1944, in the close attention given at the official level to the preparation of the Dumbarton Oaks proposal, the Australian-New Zealand conference in Canberra and the subsequent meeting in Wellington, and the active role sought by Australia in advancing the full employment theme at successive conferences on economic affairs—all these were drawn together and applied by the Australian delegation at San Francisco. Ministers and some officials had gained experience by their participation in international discussions. Since early in 1942, at the direction of the Minister for External Affairs, preparatory work on the future world organisation and other aspects of post-war international cooperation had been proceeding in the Department of External Affairs in cooperation with other departments, especially with the Defence Department, Attorney-General's Department and senior economic advisers. A great deal of this preparatory work and the policies formed as a result of it were summarised in a statement by Evatt in Parliament on 8th September 1944, and this statement and the documents attached to it later became part of the brief of the Australian delegation to San Francisco.

The Australian delegation went to San Francisco especially well prepared by prior discussion of the matters likely to be at issue and furnished with a wealth of documentation as well as the services of advisers expert in various phases of the subject. By comparison with other countries of its

[6] Full Cabinet Agendum 805—report submitted by Drakeford dated Melbourne, 27 Jan 1945, considered at meeting 26 Feb 1945. The results of the International Conference (of 52 nations) in November was described in the Governor-General's speech of 21st February (*Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, p. 10) and there was passing reference to the conferences at Wellington, Montreal and London on aviation.

[7] War Cabinet Minute 3097; Agendum 381/1943.

[8] War Cabinet Minute 3284; Full Cabinet Agendum 740; *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 73, p. 12; No. 77, pp. 46-8.

size Australia was exceptionally well prepared to play the very active role that Evatt decided that it should play.[9]

While the Dumbarton Oaks Conference was still in progress the Australian Government had formed the view that while it was essential that the proposed organisation should have the united backing of the three Great Powers because of their preponderant military strength, the settlement of international disputes should not be left entirely to the arbitrary decision of the proposed Security Council; that the General Assembly should be given powers and functions which would enable it to be in practice the central body of the world organisation; that far more attention should be given to social economic and humanitarian problems; and that member nations should declare the principles they were prepared to uphold and enter into specific undertakings regarding their duties as members.[1]

These views were confirmed at the Australian and New Zealand conference at Wellington and so the sister nations went to San Francisco with common objectives and with a prior understanding of each other. Mr Peter Fraser, who was Minister for External Affairs as well as Prime Minister of New Zealand, led the New Zealand delegation and was accompanied by New Zealand officials who had already worked with a number of the Australian officials who accompanied Evatt. Throughout the conference the two delegations were lodged in the same hotel. The role of Fraser was certainly not that of a lieutenant to Evatt. His character was loftier and his political outlook less complicated than that of Evatt. He started his debate from principles; Evatt looked for principles after he had decided on the issue. Evatt could see around more corners; Fraser had vision of a wider human landscape, and hence had a clearer and steadier purpose. Evatt was sometimes passionate about wrongs he thought had been done to himself; Fraser was always passionate about wrongs done to others. Each respected the good qualities of the other. Fraser was perhaps one of the few men from whom Evatt would take the reproof or homely admonition that was sometimes needed. Evatt had an ingenuity and a lawyer's knowledge that made him adept in a conference whose purpose was to draft a constitution. These comments, necessarily based on the personal observation of the writer, are offered in order to show that Australian and New Zealand cooperation was not only between

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[9] The standard account of the Australian participation in the San Francisco Conference—and it is an unusually full, prompt and objective one—is the report by the delegates to the Prime Minister, dated 26th June and presented to Parliament on 5th September 1945. For a lighter account of the background by a member of the delegation, see Hasluck, "Australia and the Formation of the United Nations. Some Personal Reminiscences", *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, Vol 40, Part III and Vol 41, Part V. See also, for commentary on the Australian role by Australians, G. Greenwood and N. Harper, *Australia in World Affairs, 1950-55* (1957); Hasluck, *Workshop of Security* (1948); N. Harper and D. Sissons, *Australia and the United Nations* (1959); H. V. Evatt, *The United Nations* (1948); and F. W. Eggleston, *Reflections on Australian Foreign Policy* (1957), Chapter 2. Two brief accounts of New Zealand's role by persons who were present help to restore balance: J. V. Wilson, "A United Nations Retrospect" in *External Affairs Review* (Department of External Affairs, Wellington), Vol. X, No. 8, August 1960, pp. 1-15; and Eugene P. Chase, "Peter Fraser at San Francisco" in *Political Science* (Victoria University of Wellington), Vol 11, No. 1, pp. 17-24. The criticism by an eminent political opponent of Evatt's personal role can be found in *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 184, pp. 5156-62.

[1] Parliamentary Papers 1945 (No. 24, Group E), *Report by Australian Delegates*, p. 8, and statement by Evatt in House of Representatives, 8 Sep 1944 (*Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 179).

nations but between persons. The cooperation made both countries an acknowledged force at San Francisco.

Before the conference began in San Francisco a British Commonwealth meeting was held in London, the countries represented being the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India. The Australian delegates were Forde, Evatt and Bruce. The United Kingdom had undertaken to inform the other members of the Commonwealth on the results of the Yalta discussions and to elucidate any other matters in doubt. This was also the customary attempt to resolve any Commonwealth matters before taking part in a wider meeting. Advantage was also taken of their presence in London for Churchill to give an intimate review of the state of the war and the international outlook in a session with a restricted attendance at No. 10 Downing Street.

Lord Cranborne, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, who presided over all the other sessions, was at some pains in his opening statement to make it clear that the purpose of the meeting was not to "gang up" against other nations. As the conference proceeded any hope to do so proved illusory. Evatt made it clear that the voting procedure agreed on at Yalta among the Great Powers would be opposed and that on matters of colonial trusteeship and the economic and social aspects of the Charter Australia wanted to go further than the Great Powers had agreed.

Apart from the fact that there was not identity of view on all matters, it was of some political importance that the Dominions should establish their own identity. A suggestion had already been made that the United States and the Soviet Union should have multiple representation in the United Nations to balance the fact that the United Kingdom—or so it was thought—could command the votes of the Dominions. This misconception about the Commonwealth was attacked in public by Evatt who asserted that Britain and the four Dominions would be "separate, distinct, equal and autonomous" members of the proposed organisation. Their international status had been shown by their activity in the war, while in the peace settlement they would have their own distinctive regional interests to safeguard. The independence he asserted he began to demonstrate by his attempts to improve the Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta proposals to which Britain had agreed. Although in the upshot the Dominions went to San Francisco in their own separate identity, the Soviet Union applied its claim to have multiple representation by forcing the recognition as separate members of the "United Nations" of the Ukraine and Byelo Russia before the conference met, thus obtaining the three votes originally claimed by it to balance the British Commonwealth. The experience of the San Francisco Conference, however, was that whereas the three Socialist Republics always voted together, the Dominions made their separate and sometimes differing judgments.

Although the meeting in London did not attempt to produce an agreed approach by the British Commonwealth to the agenda of the San Francisco

Conference, it did serve a very useful purpose in identifying the issues that would have to be faced and in giving precision to them.

Questions relating to colonial trusteeship had already been discussed with the United Kingdom. The Australian-New Zealand Agreement and the declaration issued after the Wellington Conference had caused concern in Britain, which had far more extensive colonial responsibilities at that stage than the two Dominions, but in subsequent discussions Australia had thought that "a broad area of agreement had been reached". In London, however, they found that the Big Three had reached other views and that the United Kingdom was now advocating the Big Three proposals. From this point onwards both Australia and New Zealand sought to take a lead in moving faster and further than Britain in matters of international trusteeship affecting all dependent territories as well as the League of Nations mandated territories.[2]

At San Francisco the Australian delegates were Forde and Evatt. They were accompanied by a group of sixteen "assistants and consultants" and seven "advisers". Only three or four of the "assistants and consultants" would have claimed any close technical knowledge of the subject matter of the conference and the others were widely representative of the Australian community—members from both sides of Parliament, leaders of nation-wide organisations, representatives of each of the three fighting services, an academic, an editor and a feminist—and they would seem to have been assembled to help broaden the Australian interest in the plans for an international organisation and to prepare the way for eventual acceptance by Australia of the results of the conference. The main burden of conference work fell on the three or four consultants who held official appointments and on the team of advisers who were all in Government service. The others had reasonably good chances of observing what was going on but the objectives of policy had already been laid down by the Ministers, mainly Evatt, and the decisions and adjustments to meet the changing situation from time to time were taken within the "inner circle" of Ministers and their close advisers. Indeed the Australian delegation really resolved itself into two separate parts—the governmental people and the others—and although there were occasional meetings of the full delegation and although the "others" were allotted to attend various committees, their association with the "inner circle" was such that they certainly could not be regarded as having taken part or to have approved of everything the two delegates did or to have participated in the work to such an extent as to be committed to support the conclusion that was reached.[3] In part, this division was the inescapable result of the

[2] See Parliamentary Papers, No. 24 of 1945, p. 10.

[3] For a criticism of this feature of the delegation's work see speech by McEwen, *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 184, p. 5159. Of Evatt, he said: "He worked untiringly and no man in that whole assembly could have devoted himself more completely to the work in hand. I am bound to say, however, that he completely disregarded the existence of the dozen consultants and advisers appointed by the late Prime Minister." On the conference proceedings he said: ". . . whenever anything had to be said on behalf of Australia the ubiquitous Dr Evatt appeared and stated the case." Of policy decisions: "The fact is clear to my mind that at San Francisco the personal views of the Minister for External Affairs were consistently put forward as the foreign policy of Australia."

pressure of work and the almost frantic activity that surrounded Evatt once the business sessions of the conference had started. The physical and mental energy he applied night and day over a period of ten weeks of constant and changing arguments and frequent controversy, both inside and outside the conference rooms, urged on by a daemonic will and inspired by the growing attention being given to him on his first entrance on a world forum, were beyond normal human experience. There may have been Australians who had been more admired but none who had ever been more noticeable at an international gathering. He ended by being cheered as "the greatest champion of the small powers" because of his fight about the "veto" in the Security Council voting procedures but an Australian on the delegation found reason to say of the same activity that it was "more histrionic than heroic", while his tactics were considered by the same critic to have been harmful to Australian interests.[4]

Part of Evatt's opportunity was created by the political necessity of continued unity among the Great Powers. The Dumbarton Oaks draft and the Yalta understanding had been the outcome of the endeavours of the United States and the United Kingdom to ensure the participation of the Soviet Union—an end which Curtin had favoured at the Prime Ministers' meeting. The same necessity was felt by them at San Francisco and they lived under the perpetual risk that unless this unity, which depended so much on the acquiescence of the Soviet Union, were maintained there would be no Charter and no world security system. At San Francisco they formed an inner committee of the four sponsoring powers which conferred regularly on the management of conference business and discussed privately the major issues, sometimes with the addition of France to their number. Evatt, finding on this occasion that principle was a better argument than political necessity, led the protest against Great Power control, set about organising the small powers and on occasions became a negotiator outside the conference rooms to press small powers' ideas on the inner committee.

At the beginning of the conference the Australian delegation, as a result of the preparations made before reaching San Francisco, made formal proposals for 38 amendments of substance to the Dumbarton Oaks draft and Yalta formula. Of these 26 were either adopted without material change, adopted in principle or made unnecessary by other alterations. These figures betoken a significant contribution. Furthermore, by gaining election to the Executive Committee of 14 and hence of the Coordination Committee, which prepared the final draft of the Charter, Australia was throughout the conference closely associated with the sponsoring powers in managing the business of the conference and overcoming the difficulties that arose from time to time, and thus established itself as a nation capable of making a significant contribution.[5] The status that Australia gained in a lasting way as the result of the San Francisco Conference was due

[4] Speech by Mr McEwen; *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 184, pp. 5160-61.

[5] Evatt, assisted by Hasluck, sat on the Executive Committee. K. H. Bailey and Hasluck were on the Coordination Committee.

perhaps as much to what was done on these committees as by its more dramatic controversies.

The major issues with which Australia concerned itself were the voting procedures of the Security Council, the powers of the General Assembly, the enlargement of the functions of economic and social cooperation, trusteeship, regional arrangements for security, the procedures for peaceful settlement of disputes, an attempt to establish criteria for the election of non-permanent members of the Security Council, the International Court of Justice, the procedure for amending the Charter, the declaration of principles in the Charter and the exclusion of matters falling within domestic jurisdiction from international action.

It is beyond the scope of the present volume to recount the proceedings of the conference. To do so without giving attention to the work of other delegations as well as that of Australia would be to give a partial account. To do so in any critical or analytical way without pursuing the narrative into the post-war years to test policy at San Francisco by experience of the United Nations in operation would be to give an incomplete one. The outcome of the conference, in which Australia shared, was the Charter of the United Nations and the Statute of the International Court of Justice. Australia signed the Charter (which also created the Court) at San Francisco on 26th June and ratified it on 4th October, the ratification being deposited on 1st November. Although constitutionally the ratification of treaties is an executive act, the Government sought the approval of the Australian Parliament by introducing the Charter of the United Nations Bill on 30th August, and after extensive debate the measure was passed on the voices in both Chambers.[6]

On the closing day of the San Francisco Conference the participating governments approved of interim arrangements for bringing the Charter into force and established a Preparatory Commission to convoke the first General Assembly, and prepare for its agenda as well as to do much other preparatory work. This Commission met briefly at San Francisco and appointed an Executive Committee of 14 members, including Australia. Thus Australia continued to play a prominent role in the formation of the United Nations.

4—POST-WAR PLANNING IN AUSTRALIA

Side by side with the development of Australian views about the post-war world, close and detailed attention was being given to the practical tasks of shaping post-war Australia. The recording of these matters in detail presents a difficulty to the historian of Australia in the war, for at the point where his study terminates the story of post-war reconstruction is entering on its most critical chapters. To write about it would be like making a judgment on a speech after hearing only the introductory passages. The testing of the policy and the political arguments about it came after the war had ended.

[6] *Charter of the United Nations Act*, No. 32 of 1945. *Commonwealth Debates*, Vols 184 and 185.

Consequently the task attempted in this volume will be a modest one, limited to the purpose of describing where the post-war planning began, the administrative arrangements made for it and, broadly, the methods chosen for planning, together with a brief account of those decisions taken in wartime by Cabinet which clearly indicate the direction in which the Government had chosen to go. Many other phases of the work will be left unrecorded even though they happened before peacetime began.

The account of post-war planning begins in the time of the Menzies Government. When the Department of Labour and National Service was created in October 1940 it was decided to establish a Reconstruction Division in that department and in early February 1941 Cabinet approved of the formation of a Commonwealth Inter-Departmental Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, with the Minister for Labour and National Service, Holt, as chairman, and Evatt, one of the Opposition members of the Advisory War Council, as vice-chairman. The functions of this committee included advice to the government on the allocation to appropriate departments of investigations to ensure that the full resources of Commonwealth departments were brought to bear on reconstruction problems, or, to suggest other machinery for the investigation and to review current policy "from the viewpoint of its implications for the post-war period". The committee was a large one representative of 15 departments or instrumentalities so it formed itself into a number of sub-committees. Topics uppermost at the beginning were soldier preference, repatriation and agricultural policy.

The Reconstruction Division provided the secretariat for this Committee and it also had a function of assisting and coordinating the work on reconstruction by the various Governments in Australia and by various authorities. It did in fact hold a conference with State officials in June 1941, and another conference with representatives of the Australian universities. It got into touch with a wide range of non-governmental bodies, including churches, learned societies, communal or group organisations, political parties, employers' associations and trade unions and women's movements. It planned an educational and publicity programme to promote "informed discussion by the public of any reconstruction proposals". It was very ambitious on paper and, considering the smallness of the staff of the division, very active in its first 12 months before it was hampered by the confusion of political changes at the end of 1941 and then by the demands presented on all agencies of government by the Japanese threat. Evatt, as vice-chairman, appeared to have taken a livelier interest in the work of the Advisory Committee than the chairman, Holt, and on several occasions was its representative and spokesman.

Another early formative influence was the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Social Security, set up by Parliament on the motion of Menzies in July 1941 to report on "ways and means of improving social and living conditions in Australia and of rectifying any anomalies in existing

legislation".[7] Its first report presented in September 1941 said that if the peace was to be won, Australia must have ready a complete plan of social security. In later reports, after the change of government, it maintained its interest in the post-war situation and the need for social planning. The evidence presented eagerly to it by economists and publicists brought to bear on Parliament many of the ideas that were stirring in the community about a new world after the war. Under this influence the Committee moved from the emphasis on the planning of social security to the need for economic planning in order to attain social security. When, in its Fifth Interim Report of 8th October 1942, it favoured the appointment of a Minister "to be responsible for economic planning post-war" and proposed the setting up of five committees for national planning and coordination, works development, secondary industries planning, rural planning and demobilisation and repatriation planning, it was reflecting ideas that were already current in administrative circles.[8]

Similar ideas were current in the Labour movement, partly generated by the community and partly promoted by the political leaders looking for future endorsement of their own plans. At the November 1942 conference in Melbourne the Australian Labour Party readily resolved that immediate planning for national post-war reconstruction was necessary and that the Government should appoint a Minister whose sole duty would be to proceed immediately with the preparation of a comprehensive scheme of post-war reconstruction and to coordinate the work of all Federal and State Government agencies in this field. At the same conference the delegates had welcomed Evatt's proposals for constitutional amendments to give the Commonwealth additional powers for post-war reconstruction.

On 4th August 1942 Curtin announced the appointment of a Cabinet sub-committee to keep under review the progress of reconstruction planning and to coordinate and direct inter-departmental activities. The sub-committee would correlate all phases of reconstruction and recommend the future of reconstruction and the direction of it. The members were Chifley, Evatt, Holloway (Social Services) and Ward (Labour). Curtin recalled the fact that the Reconstruction Division of the Department of Labour was already in existence, that a number of special committees had been established and others were contemplated and that the Tariff Board was making certain inquiries.[9] He also mentioned that a Rural Reconstruction Commission had been proposed. The setting up of this sub-committee appears to have been an attempt by Cabinet to face the fact that already inside the governmental structure a number of different departments and agencies were being obliged by the nature of the work coming before them to engage in activities concerning the post-war world.[1]

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[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 167, p. 852.

[8] Parliamentary Papers, No. 88 (Group H).

[9] The Tariff Board inquiry had been set up to report on industrial and economic readjustments that Australia must expect to make to deal with the situation after the war. This was the Government's response to a recommendation on economic problems made by the Joint Committee on Social Security. See *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 28, p. 13.

[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 36, p. 14.

On 23rd September 1942 Curtin said that it was not intended at that stage to establish a "Ministry of Reconstruction". The first duty was to draw together the threads of the various inquiries that were being made to ascertain exactly what needed to be done.[2]

On 22nd December Curtin announced the appointment of Chifley as Minister for Post-War Reconstruction while continuing to hold the portfolio of Treasurer. He linked this announcement directly to the Constitutional Convention with the States, claiming that it had been agreed that a number of powers would be transferred from the States to the Commonwealth and "the passage by the States of the necessary legislation would greatly enhance reconstruction planning".[3]

Chifley's first major action as Minister for Post-War Reconstruction was to appoint on 1st January 1943 a Rural Reconstruction Commission to begin investigations immediately into the problems of primary industry generally and to submit plans for the rehabilitation of rural industries and for the improvement of life in the rural areas.[4] Such a commission had been under consideration even before the creation of the new Ministry and, in view of the speed of its appointment, one assumes that its membership had already been in prospect.[5]

A fortnight later, on 15th January 1943, the appointment of Dr Coombs as Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction was announced, it being stated that he would be relieved of his duties as Director of Rationing as soon as possible.[6] The assembling of a department, largely by recruitment from outside the Public Service, proceeded rapidly.

When the department was fully organised it functioned both through its own departmental staff of executive officers, research officers and technical officers and with the aid of commissions on rural reconstruction, housing and secondary industries, a national works council and standing committees, composed of representatives of various interested departments and organisations, to deal with re-employment, demobilisation and reconstruction training. By comparison with some other wartime creations, the department did not build up an unduly large staff of its own but sought to use and to coordinate the work of existing departments and agencies alongside it in the structure of administration.

In one of his earliest statements about the new portfolio, Chifley said that the main function of reconstruction would be positive—to create conditions in which there would be jobs for all those willing to work and to guide production into channels which would give to the people the things necessary for a higher standard of living. They would also seek

[2] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 43, p. 19.

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 48, p. 17. For discussion of the constitutional issues see p. 524 below.

[4] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 49, p. 35. Later the terms of reference were changed and the commission was appointed as a board of inquiry under National Security Regulations. See *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 55, p. 47.

[5] The members were the Minister for Agriculture of Western Australia, F. J. S. Wise, as Chairman; the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, J. F. Murphy; the Professor of Agricultural Science at Melbourne, S. M. Wadham; and the Director of the Rural Debt Adjustment Board, New South Wales, C. R. Lambert.

[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 49, p. 48.

to give benefits and protection to those individuals who did not achieve economic security. Among particular matters he mentioned were rehabilitation of primary industry, decentralisation of industry, housing, slum clearance, a national works programme (including water conservation and extension of electrical facilities) and better nutrition.[7] In another statement he enlarged on the theme of decentralisation by some remarks on planned regional development.[8]

His reference to a national works programme was followed by a discussion with State Ministers and in July a Premiers' Conference decided to establish a National Works Council to determine post-war works policy. Proposals for works from all parts of Australia would be coordinated and fitted into a comprehensive plan to be carried out in various stages, the most urgent being restorative works needed for the civil community to resume activity. "No estimate can be given even in broad terms of the money needed," said Chifley, "but the only limit to the operation of Australia's internal economy after the war will be the availability of manpower and materials."[9]

Animating all the planning was the doctrine of full employment. "The primary aim of our post-war economic policy must be a high and stable level of employment," Chifley said on more than one occasion. Work, as well as being available, should be adequately rewarded and directed towards worthwhile ends. It meant raising consumption by those now on low incomes, improving the environment by housing, town and country planning, modern transport and social services. "Above all," he said, "it means placing permanently within the reach of every one of us freedom from basic economic worries, the realisation of some of our ambitions for personal development, and the opportunity of bringing up happy, healthy, well-educated families." This was the yardstick by which he would measure plans coming to him from the commissioners and committees.

For all this there must be planning and there must be some controls, "fairly heavy" tax rates, some regulation of the use of resources to avoid competing demands for materials and labour, and the ending of monopolistic or other restriction on output.[1]

We will now summarise briefly some of the wartime decisions taken in the various fields of reconstruction. First, social services. In the statement mentioned above, Chifley referred to "the most conspicuous and urgent gaps" in social security as unemployment and sickness benefits, a nation-wide employment service and a nation-wide health and medical

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[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 58, p. 47.

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 59, p. 26.

[9] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 61, p. 23. In the early reports of the Joint Committee on Social Security the importance of a national works programme in avoiding unemployment had been stressed. For example, the Third Interim Report of 25th March 1942 (Parliamentary Papers, No. 72, Group H) said: "It is now clearly understood that the nation has a large measure of responsibility for maintaining the level of employment. Probably the most effective means of achieving this is to have in readiness public works projects which can be commenced as soon as unemployment increases. . . ."

[1] See a Post-War Reconstruction Department pamphlet: *Planning for Peace. Three Articles by the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, the Hon J. B. Chifley* (undated). Most of the material also appeared in a statement made on 1st December 1943 (*Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 69, pp. 9-19).

service. Curtin's policy speech for the 1943 elections had promised unemployment and sickness benefits and a Bill for this purpose was among a number of measures on social services introduced in the session which commenced in February 1944.[2] The Bill provided that unemployment and sickness benefits would be available to women between 16 and 60 and men between 16 and 65, the amounts ranging from 15s to 25s a week according to age and marital status. A means test restricted the income of a recipient to 20s a week (or less in the case of people under 21). The scheme was to be financed by the National Welfare Fund which had been created by legislation in 1943,[3] in application of the Government's view that an insurance scheme for social security was neither equitable nor well suited to the economy and that social services should be met from a trust fund created from general revenue or annual sum of £30,000,000 or one quarter of the collections from income tax on individuals whichever was less. The Government apparently had faith that the surplus would accumulate in the fund to provide additional social service benefits.

The employment service was eventually established as an essential part of the *Re-establishment and Employment Act, 1945*.[4]

The attempt to provide a nation-wide health and medical service ran into controversies that continued beyond the wartime period and hence will not be examined in detail here. In his policy speech of 26th July Curtin had said that work had been proceeding continuously on the formulation of a comprehensive health scheme—including hospital services, medical attention and the provision of medicines.[5] In November the proposals for pharmaceutical benefits—the "free medicine" scheme—were placed before representatives of the pharmacists. On 16th February 1944 the Pharmaceutical Benefits Bill was introduced in the Senate and after keen controversy was passed. The prospects of cooperation from either of the two professions in implementing the Act dwindled steadily after its passage and the prospects of the scheme becoming effective were still uncertain when in November 1945 the High Court found the Act invalid.[6]

A second major undertaking that was commenced was in housing. Towards the end of 1943 the Housing Commission produced a preliminary report and this was considered by the Full Cabinet on 7th December 1943.[7] The Commission recommended the establishment of a Commonwealth Planning Authority. It sought the approval of State authorities to enable the Department of Post-War Reconstruction to assist them prepare plans for towns and make available information and advice on town planning

[2] No. 10 of 1944, assented to on 5 Apr 1944.
[3] No. 12 of 1943, assented to on 20 Mar 1943.
[4] No. 11 of 1945, assented to on 28 Jun 1945, Part II, Division 5, Clauses 47-9.
[5] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 60, p. 22.
[6] No. 11 of 1944, assented to on 5 Apr 1944; *Commonwealth Law Reports*, Vol 71, p. 237.
[7] No. 565, which was dated November.

and housing.[8] There should be three stages in a housing programme—the "immediate" (during which the extent of building would depend on resources); "immediate post-war" (for which the target should be 50,000 dwellings at the end of the first post-war year); and "long-term" (with a target of 80,000 dwellings a year). The fixing of priorities for materials should be continued after the war. The allocation of houses to the various districts would be, in the beginning, on the pre-war population. Houses should go to discharged defence personnel, those with inadequate housing, and those on low incomes, with special consideration for large families. Existing housing authorities should concentrate on houses for rental. Only moderate-priced houses should be approved for ownership. All housing should be subsidised by the Commonwealth Government provided it was not less than a minimum standard or above a set maximum cost. Tenants with "sub-economic" incomes should be assisted by subsidised rentals. The Commonwealth should assist in providing communal facilities. State Governments should be requested "as a condition of participation of any subsidies and the securing of other financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government" to legislate to set up State housing authorities with power to acquire land, clear slums, condemn sub-standard dwellings, construct houses for rent or purchase and to administer housing projects. A building research station should be established without delay.[9] The Cabinet accepted the recommendations but changed "subsidies" to "financial assistance".[1]

A day later the Cabinet considered another agendum,[2] this time from the Department of Labour and National Service which had been responsible for housing war workers. It was decided to extend the activities of the War Workers' Housing Trust to classes other than "war workers" and to coordinate the plans of the State home building authorities and the Trust. The Trust was given a target of 1,215 houses for three months "to begin as soon as possible".[3]

Chifley took the Housing Commission's preliminary report to the Premiers' Conference held between 25th and 27th January 1944.[4] Discussion was general but some points emerged which were to affect later discussions. Mr Playford (South Australia) was firmly of the opinion that the best method of finance was for the Commonwealth to provide money for the States at a low interest rate. Any attempt to dictate standards should take account of local government control of building standards. Some indications were given of the Premiers' own views of their housing

[8] The second report of the Commission, dated 31st March 1944, was a comprehensive document of 74 printed pages which covered national, regional and town planning; land for residential purposes; community facilities; housing standards; administration of housing; conditions of financial assistance. The final report was tabled by Dedman on 18th September 1945.

[9] A submission to this effect was approved by the Cabinet in March 1944—Full Cabinet Agendum 565B. On 26th June 1944 the appointment of staff for the "Experimental Building Station" was announced (*Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 83, p. 6).

[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 70, p. 40.

[2] No. 553 of 8 Dec 1943.

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 70, p. 42.

[4] *Proceedings of the Premiers' Conference, 25th to 27th January 1944.*

shortages: 60,000 to 70,000 in Victoria; 64,000 additional houses in Queensland by 1948; and 8,000 in Western Australia.

The matter went to the Full Cabinet[5] on 7th February, and it approved an approach to the States with proposals that the Commonwealth would lend money for approved schemes to State housing authorities, houses would be let at economic rental or one-fifth of family income whichever was the less ("economic rental" being that calculated on the cost of the house), the Commonwealth would bear three-fifths of the loss involved, and the States would have adequate machinery for erection and letting, assistance to home purchasers, slum clearance and town planning. The probable cost to the Commonwealth would be £500,000 in the first year and £5,000,000 after ten years.[6]

The Minister for Post-War Reconstruction put to Cabinet on 14th July 1944 a proposal that the Departments of Post-War Reconstruction, Munitions, War Organisation of Industry, Interior and Labour and the Manpower Authority should collaborate in measures to restore the capacity of the building industry. It was argued that the programme already sponsored was not large enough to prevent an intensified shortage of housing even during the remainder of the war, that the long-term programme of 50,000 houses in the first year after the war was too small, and that, no matter how fully prepared the States might be, it was impossible for them to carry out anything approaching the first year's programme unless the building industry was restored to something approaching its pre-war capacity. Subsequently a Building Industry Committee attached to Post-War Reconstruction, with subsidiaries in each State, was set up "to coordinate action and revive and expand the building industry".

In the meantime the department's proposals, as approved by the Cabinet, and in the form of an "outline for an agreement" for post-war housing were extensively discussed at the Premiers' Conference on 25th and 26th August 1944. Some of the points made by the Premiers were accepted by Curtin as amendments to the "outline", but it was plain that the States would wish to have a freer hand in the operation of any scheme than the Commonwealth was suggesting.[7]

A Cabinet meeting of 10th November 1944[8] approved the proposed agreement but asked for an agendum from the Minister for Repatriation providing for Commonwealth construction of homes for rental or purchase by servicemen and their dependents and if possible other defence workers. The Cabinet approved the maximum possible financing of home building through the Commonwealth Bank. The Minister presented the required agendum on 11th January. His department's conclusions were that existing legislation did not permit the expansion of Commonwealth building into

[5] Agendum No. 565A.

[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 76, p. 29, on 17th February 1944 records that the Report from the Commonwealth War Housing Trust on progress of the new permanent home building programme had described difficulties in financial arrangements with the Victorian Housing Commission and with the New South Wales Housing Commission.

[7] See *Proceedings of the Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers, held at Canberra, 25th and 26th August 1944.*

[8] Agendum No. 565C.

the States to the extent of building homes for rental purposes; the *War Services Homes Act 1918-1941* was not a measure to be used for this purpose; if the Act were extended there would be immediate pressure for further special concessions and such extension would create a Commonwealth-wide scheme parallel to that of the proposed post-war national housing. It would be necessary to consult the States.

Following a discussion by Commonwealth and State officers in June 1945, a re-draft of the agreement was circulated to the States and, at a further Premiers' Conference in August 1945—a week after the ending of hostilities—the new Prime Minister, Chifley, asked the State Governments to endorse it. Before commenting on any points of detail, the Premiers emphasised the critical importance of providing labour, both skilled and unskilled, for the building industry and for the production of building materials. This was part of a wider problem of the orderly release of men from the armed services and the conversion from wartime industries and defence works. It was also linked with a Commonwealth proposal for the maintenance of control over building and building materials. The Commonwealth had a plan under which targets for building would be agreed upon and State building quotas would be allotted. A system of issuing permits to build, in accordance with principles agreed to between Commonwealth and States, would be adopted; and control of specified key materials would be retained. This plan was referred to officials for further examination, one of the major points to be resolved being whether controls would be exercised by the Commonwealth at the request of the States, or by the States, or by a joint authority.

In respect of the terms of the proposed housing agreement there were still some unresolved differences of view over the terms under which capital funds would be provided to the States and over the announcement by Chifley that the Commonwealth would not take part in home purchase schemes, leaving that aspect of the original plan for attention by the States.[9] Nevertheless sufficient progress had been made by the end of the war that it was possible for a Housing Agreement to be concluded between the Commonwealth and States in November 1945, while a commencement had been made with the building of houses even before the agreement was concluded and before hostilities ended.

Part of the relevance of this unfinished narrative is that it affords another illustration of the way in which post-war reconstruction in Australia was not a simple matter of planning, decision and action by a single authority but was a matter of prolonged negotiation, both of principle and detail, between seven governments, with a perpetual concern about the rights or the ambitions of each and about the need to have uniformity all over Australia, in spite of local variations, so that no State was favoured or made to suffer more than another.

On 13th July the Department of Works had become the Department of Works and Housing and had been given administration of the Housing

[9] See *Proceedings of the Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers, held at Canberra, 20th to 23rd August 1945.*

Agreement, the War Housing Division, and the War Housing Trust (previously with the Department of Labour), the issue of permits and the Building Industry Committee and its State subsidiary committees (previously with Post-War Reconstruction), and the Landlord and Tenant Regulations (previously with the Prices Branch in the Department of Customs) and War Service Homes Commission. Housing in Commonwealth territories remained a responsibility of the Department of the Interior. Most of the housing problems still lay in front of them.

Another field in which a commencement was made was a national works programme and at the Premiers' Conference in Melbourne in July 1943 Curtin spoke of the need to have ready a planned programme of works to put in hand as soon as war ended as part of the re-employment and rehabilitation of the 800,000 persons who would have to be reabsorbed in civil employment. His first idea was that there should be a National Works Commission "to provide for effective cooperation with the States". The Premiers, however, resisted any incursion into State responsibility, but, having before them the example of the wartime operation of a Coordinator-General of Public Works and lured by the prospect of being able to make a list of desirable works, the conference agreed to set up a National Works Council, with the Prime Minister as chairman and the Premiers as members. It was arranged that, after consultation with State coordinators of works, Sir Harry Brown[10] (Coordinator-General) would prepare a list for the Council to consider so that when war ended the planning of approved works would have advanced to a stage at which they could be put in hand with the least possible delay.

At the next Premiers' Conference in January 1944, however, Brown reported somewhat ruefully:

> There is abroad a general expectation in all parts of the Commonwealth that the resources available for post-war works are likely to be almost infinite, and many public bodies and associations are making strong representations to secure the execution of projects in which they are interested, although it is quite obvious from a superficial examination of some of these that they could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be regarded as falling within the category of "urgent and important".[1]

His recommendation, approved by the Council,[2] was that a programme of works of the "highest degree of priority" for immediate post-war execution and costing up to £200,000,000 should be prepared, but that before the projects came to him they should have been approved by the State Governments, financial responsibility between State Government and public body should have been defined, administering authorities should have indicated their agreement to accept the financial responsibility, and that steps should have been taken to secure any necessary legislative

[10] Sir Harry Brown, CMG, MBE. Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs 1923-40; Commonwealth Coordinator-General of Public Works 1940-45. B. Hylton, England, 28 Dec 1878. Died 5 Jun 1967.

[1] *First Report of the Coordinator-General to the National Works Council, dated 17th January 1944*, pp. 2-3, considered at the National Works Council meeting, 26 and 27 Jan 1944.

[2] Second Report of Coordinator-General, p. 1.

approval, including acquisition of land. Arrangements would be made to plan the works in detail and when a first programme had been agreed upon a second instalment could be prepared.[3] By August 1944 priorities A, B and C had been applied to a programme to cost an estimated £249,000,000. Works to cost £193,000,000, either in whole or in part, would bear priority A. These works included buildings, bridges, dams, wharves, roads, railways and rolling stock, aerodromes, forestry and land improvement, sewerage, canals and dredging.

The Commonwealth had its own contribution to make to this total. After the decision of the Council to prepare such a programme the various Commonwealth departments put forward their list of desirable post-war Federal works. These were examined by a "post-war works reviewing committee" in the light of "description standards, necessity for work, estimated cost, and degree of urgency". Originally the idea was that they should then go to the Cabinet, but so that they might be included in the programme before the Council in August 1944 the list went direct to the Council and Cabinet subsequently confirmed the arrangement. The programme required some £20,000,000.

When hostilities ceased about 60 per cent of the programme was not yet ready for immediate commencement.[4] Shortage of staff, particularly technical staff, was the main reason for this. Despite pleas for the release of men from the services the numbers had been inadequate; the Coordinator-General had applied for 252 and received only 22. Very little effort to buy plant had been made by authorities responsible for the actual works. A resolution of the Council[5] had urged examination of markets before any irrigation schemes were begun, but the Coordinator-General reported that though he had assurances that this had been properly investigated by each State before beginning a project, there was no coordination between States. In a supplementary report seven days later the immediate post-war need was clearly stated:

> Now that we have actually entered the period of peace it is assumed that the first priority, both for manpower and materials, will be given to the housing programme both government and private.[6]

Housing, except in Canberra, had not been included in the works listed in the Coordinator-General's report but he suggested that the Commonwealth housing plans should be commenced at once. Sewerage and water services, drainage, roads, etc., should be commenced with as little delay as possible; forestry should begin immediately because of the future need for timber. The remainder of the works might begin only as men and materials became available after those needed for the housing programme had been met.

A fourth field in which experts associated with the Department of

[3] *Second Meeting of the National Works Council, 24th to 25th August 1944* (No. 5389).
[4] Third Report, p. 9.
[5] Third Report, p. 2.
[6] Supplementary Report, p. 1.

Post-War Reconstruction spent considerable time was that of "regional planning". After being deferred at one Premiers' Conference and omitted from the agenda of another this was discussed at the meeting of 3rd to 5th October 1944. The central theme of the proposals was a conviction that decentralisation was both good and necessary as part of development.

Without disparaging the practical aspect of the work it can fairly be said that in some quarters the words "regional planning" had a strange mystique and had ceased to describe a method of economic development, or decentralisation or social betterment and had come to stand for an objective that was noble in itself. To the politicians and to the officials engaged in administration, either Federal or State, however, regional planning was a technique. To them it was an orderly and practical way of drawing up a programme of work, whether in housing or in water supply or anything else, one way of making a survey of resources and a method of preparing projects for consideration. In certain places—e.g. in the use of the water of the Murray Valley or the development of the Ord and Victoria River region—it also commended itself as a means of overcoming the problems set by State boundaries.

At a conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers on 20th August 1945 it was agreed that the States and Commonwealth proceed with "the classification on a regional basis of their post-war projects for development and decentralisation", that they exchange information about regional resources and that they nominate authorities "for the purpose of coordinating and exchanging their information".[7]

Another subject which, with the advent of the National Works Council, received greater attention, was transport. Advocacy of the unification of Australian railway gauges was revived. Ward, as Minister for Transport, announced on 1st February 1944 that Cabinet[8] had decided that Sir Harold Clapp[9] should make a report. Clapp reported in April and was asked to submit details of allocation of costs as between Commonwealth and States either on the basis of one-fifth to four-fifths or of half each, and to show the works definitely a charge on standardisation and those a charge on States and on Commonwealth separately. The matter was discussed at a conference of Commonwealth and State Transport Ministers in May. They agreed it was desirable from a national viewpoint but asserted that they would not derive any immediate economic advantages from it and that housing, water supply and power should have preference. Both Queensland and South Australia had alternative routes to suggest for "strategic and developmental" reasons.

The Department of Transport also brought before the Full Cabinet a

[7] See *Regional Planning in Australia*, issued by the Commonwealth Department of Post-War Reconstruction, Canberra, 1949.

[8] Agendum No. 629, 14 Mar 1944; see *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 78, p. 8. Drakeford on 7th March in Parliament had used unification of gauges as an argument for passing the Powers Bill (*Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 1047).

[9] Sir Harold Clapp, KBE. Chairman, Vic Railways Commissioners 1920-39, Aircraft Production Commission 1940-42; Dir-Gen of Land Transport 1942-44. B. Melbourne, 7 May 1875. Died 21 Oct 1952.

proposal for a "transport advisory council",[1] representative of shipping, rail, road and air transport, and the Departments of Post-War Reconstruction and Transport, to report on the extent to which coordination and development of land, sea and air transport was considered necessary in the post-war period and the means necessary to bring about such coordination and development.

Though listed for the conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers in October 1944, the item was deferred, and it was left to the States to say, after hostilities ended, what they thought of this as an example of a Commonwealth policy of centralisation.

One of the fields in which the beginning of the story gives few leads to the ultimate post-war development was in the planning for secondary industries. In October 1943 a Secondary Industries Commission had been set up "to review the wartime industrial development of the Commonwealth with particular regard to Government factories and annexes, especially munitions factories and annexes, and to plan and recommend measures for the future industrial development of the Commonwealth".[2] In the same field the Tariff Board and the Department of War Organisation of Industry had already been working and they continued to work in liaison with the new commission. Meanwhile the wartime problems of manpower, materials and demand of the industries engaged in war production continued to engage the urgent attention of various authorities and of Cabinet itself. As the end of the war approached private as well as government organisations were interested in the opportunities after peace, and the planners for post-war reconstruction were pointing to the need for some diversion of resources to civilian production if there were to be an orderly transition to peacetime conditions. There were such particular problems as the position of firms for whom defence work was terminating through changes in war needs and who were looking for continued employment of their plants. There were some definite proposals such as that by General Motors-Holden's for approval of active planning for post-war production including pilot production. As the end of the war came nearer the question of the "disposal" of the factories wholly owned and operated by the Government was being examined alongside the question of employment in privately-owned and Government-controlled plants that might be redundant in peacetime. Alongside the examination of questions of the future of private industry, including such basic questions as the raising of capital while there was still capital issues control, there was advocacy of and planning for Government ownership of at least sections of industry.

All these matters were before the Government and a great deal of groundwork was done on them. The clear lines of policy had not emerged, however, before hostilities ceased. Industry itself had been handicapped

[1] Agendum No. 734.
[2] Agendum No. 550.

in making its own plans. A report of the work of the Secondary Industries Commission, 1943-49, summed up one important phase of its operations as follows:

> Although the Commission continued to urge the review of controls with a view to their modification and lifting where possible and the release of service men and women to enable post-war preparations to be undertaken . . . in fact little alleviation of the position occurred much before the cessation of war although during the first half of 1945 private industry was able to give greater attention to post-war problems than had been possible in the previous year.[3]

A related activity concerned the disposal after the war of materials, goods, plant, buildings and so on which had accumulated during the war. On the one hand there was the danger of flooding the markets, with a detrimental effect on the restoration of peacetime production, and on the other there was the value of making use of the asset. In June 1944 a Disposals Commission was set up to dispose of or arrange for the disposal of all Commonwealth property acquired or used in connection with the defence of the Commonwealth which was no longer required.[4] About the same time the Army drew attention to the need to decide whether assets on hired property should be removed, sold or removed for recovery of materials, and whether, if they were to be sold, to whom they might be sold. The matter was directed to the Committee reporting on the machinery for disposals.[5] The suggestion was put forward that some items which were surplus might be released at once to relieve civilian shortages and the War Cabinet directed that a survey should be made.[6]

By May 1945 a note of urgency had entered the recommendations for disposal. The War Cabinet was told that "it is a matter of paramount importance that surplus stores should be cleared while a demand for them exists in the civil economy, rather than that they should be released later and cause a glut".[7] The services were urged to speed up their surveys of surplus holdings as a matter of "high importance".[8]

One factor in all the post-war plans was migration. In the middle of 1943 a submission was made by the Minister for the Interior to the Full Cabinet urging the Government to "declare as soon as possible a policy for post-war immigration and to include an estimate of the scale on which immigration was desired, the type of immigration, and the extent and terms of regulation of entry". The cooperation of State Governments should be sought.[9]

Curtin announced on 20th October that the Cabinet had appointed a

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[3] Report of Work of Secondary Industries Commission, 1943-49 (roneoed)—listed on Votes and Proceedings Paper No. 134, 25 Oct 1949.

[4] National Security (Disposal of Commonwealth Property) Regulations associated with the Department of Supply.

[5] War Cabinet Minute 3344, 22 Feb 1944.

[6] War Cabinet Minute 3668, 22 Jul.

[7] War Cabinet Minute 4221, 31 May 1945.

[8] War Cabinet Minute 4212, 28 May 1945.

[9] Full Cabinet Agendum No. 538, 27 Sep (meeting of 20 Oct 1943)—British despatch from Dominions Office, 2 Apr 1943.

committee to obtain factual information on such matters as the greater scope for absorbing migrants from Britain because of Australia's wartime development, assistance by nominated passages, opportunities for employment, reception and after-care of migrants, assistance with passage money and acceptance of ex-service migrants given free passages by the British Government.[1] In the following months a number of reports and recommendations came to the Cabinet.

At the same time the Minister for the Interior brought before Cabinet the question of those people who were already in Australia and sought to remain—internees transferred from the United Kingdom, and children evacuated from Britain—and the admission of special types of migrants such as Polish refugees in Russia and Jewish refugees. It was decided that the internees might remain if they were "refugee aliens" and likely to make desirable citizens.[2] Admission of up to 100 Polish refugees for the duration of the war only was approved subject to the Polish Government's taking full responsibility for their maintenance while in Australia and for ultimate repatriation to Poland.[3] The Jewish refugees were mainly boys to be trained in agricultural work and, since the Welfare Guardian Society would accept the obligation, their admission was approved.[4]

Spender brought up the question of post-war immigration in the Advisory War Council in connection with migration of orphan children from the United Kingdom and Forde, as Acting Prime Minister, provided him with the recommendations of the departmental committee on British migration mentioned earlier. These covered mainly the fact that the Commonwealth would welcome British ex-service people wherever demobilised, and that, if demobilised in Australia, the Commonwealth agreed that for two years after they could have the opportunity of free passages (at United Kingdom expense) back to the United Kingdom or, alternatively, for two years would have the right to bring their dependants out free.[5]

By July 1945 the problems had become complex and important enough to warrant the attention of a separate department and when Chifley formed his Ministry on 13th July he included in it a Minister for Immigration. Calwell, who was appointed to the post, had been a fervent advocate of immigration even before he received the portfolio,[6] and the post-war immigration policy owed more to his energetic promotion of it than it did to any conscious wartime planning. It should be noted that in his first public statement as Minister for Immigration he found it necessary to give a public assurance that no large-scale plan of immigration would be initiated before the demobilisation and re-employment of Australians

[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 66, p. 40.
[2] Full Cabinet Agendum No. 623, 23 Feb; decision 14 Mar 1944.
[3] Full Cabinet Agendum No. 631, 27 Mar 1944.
[4] Full Cabinet Agendum No. 645, 30 Mar 1944.
[5] Advisory War Council Minute 1366.
[6] See A. A. Calwell, *How Many Australians Tomorrow?* (1945). The foreword is dated 15th May 1945, when he was still only Minister for Information and the book clearly expresses a personal advocacy.

and the provision of additional houses for Australians had been accomplished.[7]

A fully-considered conspectus of the Government thinking on post-war reconstruction can be obtained from the White Paper on full employment presented on 30th May 1945. Reference has already been made to the ideas about a "full employment economy" on which all planning was founded. Part V of the paper dealt with special domestic problems in the change-over from war to peace. In the first place about a million men and women in the armed forces and war industries would be seeking peace-time occupations. Secondly, the wartime excess of spending power would persist until more adequate supplies of peace-time goods and services again became available, and the peacetime demand would also be backed by an accumulated purchasing power. A crisis in the fight against inflation would come in the immediate post-war period. In transfers a balance had to be sought between the need to increase production of peace-time goods, the need to build houses, the need to catch up on arrears of maintenance and restore public utilities, and the need to re-equip and expand industry for peace-time production. The degree of success in the transitional period would largely depend on how far it was found practicable gradually to transfer from the immediate war effort the key manpower and other resources required for the essential preparatory work.

The paper listed the most important measures for the changeover:

A national housing programme
A plan for land settlement
Advance planning of public works
A training scheme for ex-service personnel
A nation-wide employment service
Restoration or expansion of key industries
Control of scarce resources
A check on inflationary price rises

It was clear that controls would have to be maintained during the transition period—control of prices, control on the allotment of materials, control of capital expenditure, control of imports. It was specifically stated that direction of labour would not be continued after the war. The establishment of the Employment Service and Training schemes would assist the adjustment.[8]

To complete this section of the study it is recorded that in February 1945 the Department of War Organisation of Industry was abolished as a separate department and became a Directorate in the Department of Post-War Reconstruction. Its Minister, Dedman, succeeded Chifley as Minister for Post-War Reconstruction. Coombs continued as Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction. Chippindall, who had been Director-General of War Organisation of Industry, became Secretary of the Department of Supply and Shipping.

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 105, p. 64.
[8] Command Paper No. 11 (Group H), pp. 14-16.

5—THE BID FOR GREATER POWERS

A week after the Constitution Alteration (War Aims and Reconstruction) Bill, 1942, had been introduced by Evatt in October 1942 and without any debate having taken place, the Government, being faced with mounting opposition to the Bill and the prospect of a head-on collision with State Governments and Parliaments, decided that the debate on the Bill should not proceed.[9] Curtin announced that the measure would be referred to a Special Committee. This Committee was created by decision of the Government, not by Parliament, and the parliamentary situation simply was that the Bill remained on the notice paper while, outside Parliament, discussions proceeded about the constitutional changes which the Bill had proposed. While it is doubtful whether the Government had a clear intention on the next step when Curtin announced that the debate would be deferred, the consequence of the deferment was that the Government abandoned the original purpose of changing the Constitution by Act of the Commonwealth Parliament followed by a referendum (as provided in Chapter VIII of the Constitution) and sought the method of gaining additional legislative powers for the Commonwealth Parliament by having matters referred by the Parliaments of all the States, as provided in Section 51 (xxxvii), thus avoiding a referendum during the war. Curtin reported to this effect when informing Parliament of the position reached twelve months later.[1]

The Special Committee called together by the Government consisted of eight members of the House of Representatives and four members of the Senate, equally representative of the Government and Opposition, plus the Premier and Leader of the Opposition of each State Parliament, making a total of 24 members, 12 from the Commonwealth and 12 from the States. When the members gathered in Canberra towards the end of November the meeting was described as a Constitutional Convention. Evatt had directed the frenzied preparations for the meeting. Before the convention met he distributed a handbook entitled *Post-War Reconstruction. A Case for Greater Commonwealth Powers.*[2] In the preface, signed by Evatt, it was made clear that the proposals in the Bill introduced in the House of Representatives were not "final or definitive" and suggestions for its modification were invited. The case, in brief, was that the Commonwealth's power must be extended "to enable it to supervise a great national plan for post-war reconstruc-

[9] See p. 457 above.

[1] See *Commonwealth Debates,* Vol 176, pp. 664-5.

[2] The author, having been one of the number, recalls vividly that one Sunday morning about 30 persons, summoned individually by the Minister's private secretary and with transport and passes arranged but little information given about what they were about to do, converged on the Cabinet room in Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. Evatt was in charge and the only Minister present. Others included senior Public Servants from several different departments and constitutional and other consultants drawn from outside the Government. They were told they had to write a book. After discussion about what would go into it, tasks were allotted—some of devilling, some of writing, some of advising. Each chapter was made the particular responsibility of one person, dates for lodging manuscript were set, and the final editorship was given to Sir George Knowles, Solicitor-General. In the succeeding weeks there was frantic activity trying to make the deadline. One of the minor difficulties was the additional requirement by Evatt that statements should be reproduced from all the possible opponents of his ideas showing that in one way or another they had already committed themselves to programmes of post-war reconstruction.

tion" and the powers would have to be wide enough to ensure the planned use of Australia's economic resources so that they were fully employed and directed primarily to achieving "economic security and rising standards". The broad issue was: "Plan or chaos. Do we as a people take our future boldly into our own hands and shape it with the tools we have fashioned in the furnace of war, or do we leave it to the blind forces of economic anarchy?" In spite of this rhetorical introduction, the book did have some close reasoning in it and presented a persuasive array of material.

A summary of the war organisation of Australia led to the conclusion that the transition from war to peace would never be efficiently accomplished without a well-conceived plan for all Australia and the carrying out of this plan would call for the establishment of an organisation for peace comparable to that used for achieving victory in war. The argument in favour of a national plan was based chiefly on the necessity for a plan to give security of employment and maintain industrial conditions, to prevent inflation and profiteering by control of prices, profits and investment and to stabilise guaranteed prices for primary products. Guidance and warnings were found in an account of the aftermath of World War I. Inspiration and a definite obligation were found in a chapter on "War Aims" that dealt with the Atlantic Charter, Article VII of the Mutual Aid Agreement, the International Wheat Agreement and the I.L.O. resolutions of 1941. These obligations were reinforced by declarations in speeches by Australian leaders. These declared war aims could not remain merely as aspirations. Evatt did not even mention any argument about the extent of the "external affairs" power but ended the recital of war aims with another rhetorical appeal. Democracy must take "bold and imaginative action which actualizes the common man's determination to build a better world. If there are constitutional limitations on such bold and imaginative action, then the Constitution has become the instrument of reaction. Let us not fear to change it."

In a chapter on "Some Fundamentals of Reconstruction" reasons were presented why national control of the economic resources of the country was essential and particular problems of reconstruction were discussed under the headings of rehabilitation, economic security, the rural economy and social services.

In succeeding chapters the Bill was analysed, a good deal of attention being given to the inclusion among the proposed additional powers of a power to make laws "carrying into effect the guarantee of the four freedoms". In his speech to the House Evatt had drawn attention to this provision but had not elaborated it; in the book, however, it was discussed more fully as a question of civil liberties with particular attention to the "freedoms" of speech and expression and of religion. After argument, it was admitted that some clarification of the clause as drafted was needed and at the proper time opportunity to amend it would be given.

There were extensive appendixes reproducing documents and factual material.

Considered as a handbook prepared for a meeting that was to be described as a Constitutional Convention, the publication is a curious mixture of emotional political appeals and argument. It reveals clearly what the Government wanted to do but is not wholly convincing as a case for doing it. For example in a chapter called "Some Questions and Answers" one question posed is: "Can these objectives be attained without a large measure of Government planning and control?" The answer presented is: "Obviously they cannot. . . . Because, whatever our preconceived ideas about economic planning, it is demonstrable that the alternative is economic disorder. . . ." Another question was: "May not post-war planning deprive us of our democratic liberty?" The answer was: "Democratic liberty is not to be confused with individual licence. Not everyone in the community can be truly free, if some individuals take advantage of their liberty to exploit others. Only by controlling abuses and such evils as profiteering can we give real freedom to everybody." This sort of thing may be good stuff on the hustings but is scarcely what might be expected from an Attorney-General preparing for a Constitutional Convention. Even the section of questions and answers on constitutional matters is at much the same level. It is interesting to obesrve from it, however, that prior to the convention, Evatt rejected the alternative method of using Section 51 (xxxvii) of the Constitution under which the States could refer powers to make laws on specific subjects.[3] Past experience, he said, did not suggest that it was "satisfactory" to depend on this method. He also found limitations on the use of the external affairs power. The question posed was: "Has not the Commonwealth full power to legislate upon any topic that has been dealt with by an international arrangement to which the Commonwealth is a party?" The answer was: "No. The Commonwealth has at most the power to carry out its obligations under the exact terms of the Convention; if the Commonwealth stepped outside the principles of the Convention, the law would certainly be deemed invalid."[4]

The same political rhetoric is found in Curtin's opening remarks when the Convention met on 24th November. He had a sound point when he said that the amending of the Constitution was "primarily a question for citizens speaking as citizens" (although ultimately might be a truer word than primarily), but he was talking foolishly for such an occasion when he continued: "In the last analysis it is not even a question of enlarging the constitutional powers of the Commonwealth Parliament; rather it is a question of enlarging the self-governing rights of the people of Australia when exercising their rights of Australian citizenship."[5] Later in his speech he said:

> In short, it is not a question of merely seeking additional legal power for the Commonwealth Parliament, but rather one of imposing responsibilities upon the Commonwealth Government on the one hand to develop a progressive and comprehensive post-war policy and of imposing responsibilities on the State legislatures

[3] ibid, p. 99.
[4] ibid, p. 98.
[5] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 46, p. 22.

and governments on the other hand to cooperate fully in the administration of a national plan for reconstruction.[6]

That may be the language of a statesman but not that of a constitutionalist, and the phrase "merely seeking additional legal power for the Commonwealth Parliament" has an odd sound at a Constitutional Convention.

Perhaps the name "Convention" was a little pretentious for a gathering which had been arranged to resolve political differences over a piece of Commonwealth legislation. Curtin's opening address was a political speech. He put the main questions plainly: Is the Australian nation to have the means of planning post-war reconstruction and putting its plans into effect? Are these means to be placed in the hands of the Commonwealth Parliament? What means are required?

Evatt then presented a new draft of the Bill incorporating amendments which he had made to the original Bill in order to meet some of the objections to it. First, the Government had inserted into the Bill constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and freedom of speech and of the Press in a form in which they could not be abridged either by the Commonwealth or by any of the States. Second, the primary grant of power to the Commonwealth had been defined by the phrase "post-war reconstruction" which, Evatt said, meant national planning aimed at re-establishing the life and economy of the nation. Third, it had been made clear that the post-war reconstruction power would empower the Commonwealth Parliament to make laws with respect of 12 specific subject-matters or groups of subject-matters. Most of these had been in the original Bill. Fourth, all the present powers would be subject to interpretation by the High Court as the guardian of the federal system and the provision making the opinion of the Commonwealth Parliament conclusive had been omitted. Fifth, the clause enabling Parliament to exercise its new legislative authority without regard to certain other constitutional restrictions was altered so that the only restriction that might be disregarded was that contained in Section 92, and then only in relation to Commonwealth price-fixing or marketing legislation. Sixth, cooperation between the Commonwealth and State Governments would be facilitated by a new sub-section authorising State and local governing authorities to assist in the execution of any of the new post-war reconstruction powers to be granted to the Commonwealth Parliament.

The discussion at the Convention revealed that support for the Commonwealth Bill and for the subsequent referendum could not be gained, but that there might be agreement to refer certain specified powers to the Commonwealth in pursuance of Section 51 (xxxvii). Looking at past experience, the Commonwealth had doubts whether this procedure would prove satisfactory. When Hughes accepted this method during the 1914-18 war, only one of the State Parliaments subsequently passed the necessary legislation. There was also the risk that powers granted by a State

[6] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 46, p. 26.

Parliament could be revoked by that Parliament. Nevertheless the Commonwealth was unlikely to get anything better than a reference of powers by State legislation and Curtin was willing to try the procedure, provided that the powers to be granted were adequate, that they were granted for a long enough period, that any revocation should be made impossible without the approval of the electors of the State in question—an interesting example of the proposed use of the referendum as a blocking mechanism—and that the Premiers and Leaders of Oppositions at the Convention should agree to do their utmost to pass the legislation and to do so within a reasonably short period. Details of the legislation which it was proposed should be passed by State Parliaments were worked out in a drafting committee under Evatt's chairmanship. The Convention resolved unanimously that the Parliaments of the States should refer to the Parliament of the Commonwealth "adequate powers to make laws in relation to post-war reconstruction", that Bills to effect this would be introduced before 31st January 1943, that the reference should continue for five years after the cessation of hostilities and that none of the State Acts should be repealed or amended except with the consent of the electors of the State concerned. The draft Bill listed fourteen "matters" to be referred. The draft Bill to give effect to this agreement was accepted.[7]

At the end of February 1943, the end of the period set for the passage of State legislation, it was clear that the doubts of the Commonwealth about the success of this method had been justified. At the end of March the position was that New South Wales and Queensland had passed the Bill in the agreed form. South Australia had amended it. Western Australia had not yet completed its debate. Tasmania had shelved it. Victoria had passed it with a condition that it should not be assented to until similar bills had been passed by all the States. In due course Western Australia, like South Australia, passed the Bill with amendments that reduced the list of powers referred.

On 15th October 1943 Curtin surveyed the outcome and said that unless the "substance" of the arrangement made at the Canberra Convention were carried into effect in all six States it would be necessary to submit proposals for the alteration of the Constitution to the electors by referendum. They would wait until the next session of Parliament by which time they should know the final decisions of the State legislatures.[8]

At a Cabinet meeting on 21st October the Prime Minister announced that the Commonwealth powers question would have to be discussed at length. He had in mind to ask Parliament to meet early in the New Year and to hold a session solely for the purpose of discussing Commonwealth powers with a view to a referendum. The Government would have to decide whether or not the Bill would seek full general powers or the particular powers which were to have been referred to the Commonwealth by the States as a result of the agreement at the Canberra Con-

[7] The fourteen powers are listed at pp. 535-6 below.
[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 176, pp. 664-5.

vention.[9] On 23rd November Cabinet appointed a sub-committee consisting of the Attorney-General, the Treasurer and the Ministers for the Army, Trade and Customs and Information to submit final recommendations regarding the Powers Bill.[1] This report was before the Cabinet on 8th December and in part it read:

> We are very impressed by the almost unlimited potentialities of several of the powers included within the new list of fourteen powers. We feel it would be difficult even for anti-Labour leaders in the States to oppose proposals to which they have already agreed in principle. We think that there is now a reasonable prospect of adding these powers to the existing list of Commonwealth powers. . . .[2]

The Treasurer's comments on the proposals found no advantage in adhering to the bill agreed to at the Convention. Any advantages of unanimous political support which might be gained by adhering to it would be lost if there were any alteration, and without alteration the bill would be entirely inadequate. In places it was imprecise and vague and doubts about its effect would inevitably arise and would require interpretation by the High Court, whose decisions might prove embarrassing. He favoured a referendum on post-war powers for the Commonwealth. By doing so the Government would accept full responsibility for reconstruction and it should therefore ask for all the powers that were necessary to discharge that responsibility. The bill was originally designed for temporary purposes and framed in an atmosphere of compromise; it was inadequate for the Government's needs, had embarrassing qualifications and was unsuitable for permanent incorporation in the constitution. Now was a favourable opportunity for obtaining a satisfactory amendment of the Constitution. The Government should therefore make that its objective and start afresh.[3] The view of Chifley, now Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, prevailed at Cabinet. Following the Cabinet meeting the question was submitted to the 16th Commonwealth Conference of the Australian Labour Party meeting at Canberra from 14th December.

A year earlier, at the Special Federal Labour Conference held in Melbourne in November 1942 and January 1943 the original proposals introduced by Evatt in October 1942 had been "welcomed" as "important steps forward for the necessary revision of the Constitution and the implementation of Labour's platform" but, while affirming the proposals "as a general principle", the Conference had expressed the belief that post-war reconstruction could best be achieved by full and continued cooperation between Commonwealth and States. A motion moved by Hanlon (Queensland) urging the Government to withdraw its proposals had been rejected. At that time the Conference of course had been aware of the outcome of the Constitutional Convention of November 1942, and its vote might be interpreted as being in large part an acceptance of the compromise method agreed on by the Convention.

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[9] Full Cabinet Agendum No. 390.
[1] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 69, p. 8.
[2] Full Cabinet Agendum 573, 3 Dec 1943.
[3] Full Cabinet Agendum 573.

In December 1943 the Party was asked to endorse the proposal to submit the 14 points to a referendum, the method of reference of powers by the States having produced no results. Cosgrove[4] (Tasmania), who had been the State Premier who initiated the compromise at the Canberra Convention, and who was also the Premier of the State who had shelved the bill that was intended to give effect to the compromise, moved that the Commonwealth Government should submit the 14 powers to referendum to obtain their transfer to the Commonwealth for a period of five years after the cessation of hostilities. Evatt, invited to address the conference, supported this motion and stressed that the request was for a grant of specified powers for a fixed period. The question was not one of a general constitutional revision. Before the conclusion of the fixed period it would be possible to consider further plans for a complete revision of the existing constitutional relationships of the Commonwealth and States. He stressed, too, the view that the greatest problem in the post-war period would be unemployment and therefore the Commonwealth must be empowered to provide employment for all. Rehabilitation of the members of the fighting services and full employment for all were the two basic features of the proposed referendum.

At the conference there were both unificationists and State-righters. At that time four of the States had Labour Governments. An amendment to have a referendum to vest "full power" in the Commonwealth Parliament was moved, supported, opposed and withdrawn. The acceptance of Cosgrove's motion for a referendum on the 14 points was accepted clearly because it seemed a practicable step towards achieving some additional powers for specific tasks of post-war reconstruction.[5]

Incidentally the decision to adopt this alternative course left unresolved an argument among the lawyers whether a reference of power under Section 51 (xxxvii) of the Constitution could be restricted to a fixed period. The Commonwealth's law advisers were firmly of the opinion that it could be but several eminent lawyers who had not taken part in the Convention had argued to the contrary.

The Constitution Alteration (Post-War Reconstruction) Bill, 1944—the measure to inaugurate the procedure for constitutional change—was introduced in the House of Representatives by Evatt on 11th February. It was in substance the one which had been drafted at the Constitution Convention and which the States had agreed to pass. After reviewing the history of the matter he said that there was no practical method for laying a sound constitutional basis for Australian post-war reconstruction except by an appeal to the people. A referendum was not being forced on the States. The Canberra Convention had agreed that adequate powers for post-war reconstruction should be conferred on the Commonwealth Parliament and the States had failed to adopt the only legal method by which a referendum to give those powers could be avoided.

[4] Hon Sir Robert Cosgrove, KCMG. Premier of Tasmania 1939-58, and Minister for Education 1948-58. B. Tea Tree, Tas, 28 Dec 1884. Died 25 Aug 1969.

[5] Australian Labour Party, *Official Report of Proceedings of 16th Commonwealth Conference*, pp. 34-5.

Interjections revealed that on the Labour side there were still those who would have liked a permanent transfer of powers to the Commonwealth Parliament and on the Opposition side those who feared that at the end of five years the referred powers might not return to the States. Evatt said that the Commonwealth would not go beyond the agreement reached at the Canberra Convention. He saw the five years of a temporary grant of power as a period "on probation". The step now proposed was not final. At the end of five years it would be retracted or the people by referendum or State Parliaments by reference could make the transfer of powers permanent.

He argued that, in considering constitutional matters, political matters should be kept in subordination. The legislation presented under the added powers would be determined by Parliament as constituted from time to time. The proper place for determining rival political policies was at the polls. The fruition of constitutional reform was to make sure that whatever policy was determined upon by the electors it should be made legally possible to effectuate that policy through the Commonwealth Parliament "if it relates to matters which have become of national concern". Earlier attempts to give additional powers to the Commonwealth Parliament had failed. He cited a particular case to show that the failure came not because additional power was undesirable but because the people feared its exercise by a particular government at a particular time. He also gave reassurances about an intention to cooperate closely with the States in the exercise of the powers.

Dealing in anticipation with arguments to the effect that the Commonwealth already had powers sufficient for its purposes, he concentrated on the limitations on the defence power after hostilities ceased and quoted cases.[6]

He then discussed the fourteen subject-matters listed in the Bill, chiefly to argue that it was essential to have powers to deal with them.

His final argument was that by enlarging the powers of the Commonwealth Parliament the people of Australia would enlarge their own powers of self-government. Broadly speaking the Commonwealth Parliament was far more democratic and far more responsive to popular control than were the legislatures of the States. He mentioned upper houses elected on a property qualification and electorates unequal in numbers. By the proposed constitutional change the people would be giving themselves, "in their Commonwealth capacity", an authority to deal with post-war reconstruction, an authority which they could exercise as a nation, as one Australian people, through the Commonwealth Parliament. He continued:

> To speak of a "transfer" of powers from States to the Commonwealth is convenient, but is a misleading abstraction. If these proposals are adopted, there will be no direct loss of legislative power by any State legislature. The great change

[6] At a later stage in the speech, however, when discussing the production and marketing of primary products, he made wide claims on the application of the "external affairs" power, saying that "it might reasonably be expected to confer on the Commonwealth Parliament full power to carry out any legal obligations regarding production which rest upon it by virtue of international treaties or conventions to which Australia is a party". He did not, however, bring this into his main argument.

will be that, in relation to the specified list of subject matters, Commonwealth laws will prevail over State laws. Until the Commonwealth legislates the State law will remain effective. To refer to State rights in this connection is to overlook the fact that the only rights that matter are the rights of the people themselves.[7]

Twelve days later the Leader of the Opposition, Menzies, took up the debate. He agreed that ideally the proposals should be considered above and beyond party but the request was for powers for five years and during that limited period the chances were that they would be used by a Labour Government which, after all, had publicly associated its political programmes with its quest for additional constitutional powers. He also questioned the doctrine that a central government was always wiser and more efficient than a local government. He then examined the claim by the Government that it would be inadequately equipped to deal with post-war problems unless its powers were enlarged. There was a widespread failure to appreciate the nature of the powers already possessed by the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth had power to deal with trade and commerce with other countries and among the States. He examined further powers on taxation, customs and excise, and grants to States and concluded that the Commonwealth had complete financial authority and there was ample machinery to enable it to impose its will on the States. He turned to the defence power. Referring to some arguments used by Evatt at the convention, he himself argued that the "unwinding" of the war effort and the "winding up" for peace would be simultaneous and so the defence power, which Evatt had conceded was available for the "unwinding", would be available. He argued that powers relating to banking and currency and insurance could also be used and the power to deal with pensions had already been fully exercised by the Commonwealth Parliament.

Menzies discussed the external affairs power with some deliberation and quoted at length the dicta of Evatt when a Justice of the High Court, not to approve them, but to show that Evatt, out of his own mouth, interpreted this power as having a far-reaching authority. The Commonwealth had power to acquire property—which could, if necessary, be the State railways. Finally, and on this he laid great stress, there was the appropriation power under which, it could be presumed, the Government had already passed the *Maternity Allowances Act*, and under which the government-controlled corporations could also be presumed to have been set up. "It is a misuse of language to say that a government and a parliament possessing such far-reaching authorities as those . . . is in any real sense bereft of power to deal with the immediate post-war problems."

He concluded that the Commonwealth was certainly not bereft of power to deal with immediate post-war problems but that did not mean that some further power might not be desirable. Every provision in the Bill deserved consideration. It was unfortunate that fourteen powers had been included in the compass of one bill. Indeed if the Government wanted to concentrate the opposition to constitutional change it was going the

[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, pp. 136-153.

right way about it in wrapping up all the proposals in one parcel and saying: "You take the lot or you leave the lot."

He then dealt with each of the fourteen powers. The repatriation power had been exercised "for a score of years". Unemployment and employment were "results" not "causes". This gave the most far-reaching power in the Bill. It would enable Parliament to deal with every economic factor which, by a chain causation might result in employment or unemployment. In response to interjections he stated his own economic policy that employment and social security depended primarily upon a revival of enterprise and of business and not merely on government works. The "driving force" would be the man of business and not the learned clerk in the reconstruction department. If the Commonwealth received the power to legislate on employment and unemployment there would be no aspect of the economic life of Australia which would stand outside the control of the Commonwealth.

Menzies spoke critically of several other subject-matters in the Bill, mainly because of the uncertainty as to their meaning and the extent of the use of the powers if they were obtained. He then came to the power to deal with "the production and distribution of goods". If this power and the power on employment and unemployment were granted all limitations of substance would have been removed from the Commonwealth's legislative authority. It would enable the Commonwealth to nationalise industries.

Continuing his examination of the fourteen points he said overseas investment and exchange were already in the power of the Commonwealth. The regulation of air transport should be under the Commonwealth. Uniformity of railway gauges would only come about if the Commonwealth paid the cost and it already had power to do that. The questions of national works and health were related to the Commonwealth's power of appropriation. The consistent practice in the past by the Commonwealth had been to regard the power of appropriation as going beyond the heads of legislative power.

In general, he concluded that the powers sought in the Bill, while they contained matters of merit, were in excess of the requirements of the immediate post-war period. He had previously said that a referendum should not be allowed to interrupt the war effort. It would be a pity if temporary alterations were allowed to obscure and perhaps postpone a permanent revision of the Constitution. As soon as possible after the war and after the people had been able to devote their attention to this important and permanent problem, a popular convention ought to be summoned to make a thorough review of the whole of the structure and working of the Constitution. Summing up, he thought the powers on repatriation, overseas exchange, overseas investment and public borrowing, standardisation of railway gauges and probably national works were already possessed by the Commonwealth; powers such as rationing, control of prices and investment were probably possessed in the immediate post-

war years under the defence power but he would support amendments to remove any doubts. Some of the other powers could be justified for a limited and emergency purpose. He opposed the second and seventh points.

Menzies moved an amendment to the motion for the second reading of the bill to the effect that existing powers were not shown to be inadequate for the immediate post-war tasks of reinstatement and advancement of servicemen and others displaced from normal peacetime occupations, and for the reconstruction of primary and secondary industry. Any doubt on this point should be resolved by constitutional amendment but no amendment should be approved which "would authorise the socialisation of industry, the undue centralisation of administration, or the maintenance of such laws as unnecessarily interfere with the liberty of citizens to choose their own means of living and to exercise their rights as free people"; that the House was concerned at the surrender of legislative powers to administrative officials; that the Bill should be withdrawn and redrafted so as to declare or provide that the Commonwealth Parliament had or should have certain listed powers during a period of five years from the termination of hostilities but should not have power to enable the Executive to engage in any civil production, industry or commercial process not authorised by its existing powers; that during the period of the possession of additional powers matters of a legislative nature should be dealt with by Parliament or laid before it; and that within two years of the termination of hostilities an elective popular convention should be set up for the review of the structure and working of the Constitution.[8]

As the debate continued differences of viewpoint and particularly of emphasis were revealed among the Opposition and at the division on the amendment moved by Menzies, Spender crossed the floor to vote with the Government. Otherwise the vote was on party lines and the amendment was defeated by 46 to 18. On the motion for the second reading, although there was no call for a division from the Opposition, a division was held in order to establish that there was the absolute majority required for a bill to alter the Constitution. The result was 55 to 10, the members of the Country Party and Hughes joining Spender in voting with the Government.[9]

When the Bill passed into Committee the attitude of the Country Party was made clearer by a motion by Fadden to postpone one of the early clauses "as an instruction to the Government to call a further conference of the States to attempt to remove the remaining points of disagreement". He said there should be fuller negotiation with the States either to avoid a referendum or at least to minimise the points at issue. When the Bill came to the third reading, however, the whole of the Country Party voted against it, leaving Spender as the only member of the Opposition voting with the Government. Hughes was absent. The voting figures were 44 to 18. The change in the Country Party's attitude was due in part to the failure to have any amendments made or acceptable

[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, pp. 448-80.
[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 177, p. 1354.

explanations given on primary production and organised marketing, but very largely to the experiences in Committee, where their amendment for postponement was not even put to the vote, while both in Committee and subsequently in the House they suffered from brutishness in the chair.

In Committee Evatt moved three amendments for which he had obtained approval at a Cabinet meeting on 9th March. They concerned the supervision of delegated legislative powers, freedom of speech, and freedom of religious worship. Evatt had included the last two in the original draft placed before the Convention in 1942 but had not proceeded with them at that stage.[1]

The Senate completed the Bill on 23rd March and it was now ready for the verdict of the electorate.[2]

The voters had to say "Yes" or "No" to the question whether they approved of the following:

The proposed law is as follows:

A proposed law to alter the Constitution for a limited period by empowering the Parliament to make laws in relation to Post-war Reconstruction, and by including provisions to safeguard Freedom of Speech and Expression and Freedom of Religion.

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty the Senate, and the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia, with the approval of the electors, as required by the Constitution, as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as *Constitution Alteration (Post-war Reconstruction and Democratic Rights)* 1944.

2. The Constitution is altered by inserting, after Chapter I, the following Chapter and section:

"Chapter IA—Temporary Provisions.

60A.—(1) The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to—

(i) the reinstatement and advancement of those who have been members of the fighting services of the Commonwealth during any war, and the advancement of the dependants of those members who have died or been disabled as a consequence of any war;

(ii) employment and unemployment;

(iii) organized marketing of commodities;

(iv) companies, but so that any such law shall be uniform throughout the Commonwealth;

(v) trusts, combines and monopolies;

(vi) profiteering and prices (but not including prices or rates charged by State or semi-governmental or local governing bodies for goods or services);

(vii) the production and distribution of goods, but so that—

(a) no law made under this paragraph with respect to primary production shall have effect in a State until approved by the Governor in Council of that State; and

(b) no law made under this paragraph shall discriminate between States or parts of States;

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[1] Full Cabinet Agendum 573. Evatt later (Vol 178, p. 1411) indicated that the amendment covering supervision of delegated legislation had been suggested in Menzies's amendment (paragraph 7).

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 178, pp. 1519 ff., 1589 ff., 1698 ff., 1834 ff.

(viii) the control of overseas exchange and overseas investment; and the regulation of the raising of money in accordance with such plans as are approved by a majority of members of the Australian Loan Council;
(ix) air transport;
(x) uniformity of railway gauges;
(xi) national works, but so that, before any such work is undertaken in a State, the consent of the Governor in Council of that State shall be obtained and so that any such work so undertaken shall be carried out in cooperation with the State;
(xii) national health in cooperation with the States or any of them;
(xiii) family allowances; and
(xiv) the people of the aboriginal race.

(2) Neither the Commonwealth nor a State may make any law for abridging the freedom of speech or of expression.

(3) Section one hundred and sixteen of this Constitution shall apply to and in relation to every State in like manner as it applies to and in relation to the Commonwealth.

(4) A regulation of a legislative character under the authority of any law made by the Parliament in the exercise of any power conferred by sub-section (1) of this section—

(a) shall, subject to this section, take effect on the expiration of the fourteenth day after its contents have been notified in the manner provided by the Parliament to each senator and each member of the House of Representatives or on such later date as is specified in the regulation;
(b) shall not take effect if, within fourteen days after its contents have been so notified, either House of the Parliament passes a resolution disapproving of the regulation; and
(c) shall take effect on the date of its making or on such later date as is specified in the regulation, if the Governor-General in Council declares on specified grounds that the making of the regulation is urgently required.

(5) This section shall continue in force until the expiration of a period of five years from the date upon which Australia ceases to be engaged in hostilities in the present war, and shall then cease to have effect, and no law made by the Parliament with respect to any matter specified in sub-section (1) of this section shall continue to have any force or effect by virtue of this section after this section has ceased to have effect."

Note.—Section 116 of the Constitution, to which clause (3) of the proposed law relates, is as follows: "The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth."

Despite the arguments for consideration on a non-party basis the campaign became almost entirely political. "Yes" committees were formed by the Labour Party in each State but included any persons or parties supporting the referendum proposals, so that in Sydney, for example, when the campaign was launched at the Town Hall the people on the platform included R. Windeyer,[3] K.C., Donald Grant, Professor A. P. Elkin, Mrs Jessie Street,[4] T. Wright (Trades and Labour Council)[5] and A. McGuinness of the Teachers' Federation. In some States the associa-

[3] R. Windeyer, QC. Sometime Acting Justice of Supreme Court of NSW. Barrister-at-law; b. Sydney, 9 Sep 1868. Died 8 Nov 1959.

[4] Mrs Jessie Street. Chairman, Russian Medical Aid and Comforts Committee of NSW 1941-45; member Aust Delegation to UN Conference at San Francisco 1945. B. India, 1889.

[5] Wright was a Communist as were Jeffrey and Chandler, other members of the committee.

tion of parties, particularly the Communists, with the "Yes" committees led to the formation of a "non-party 'Yes' committee".

As early as April the Communist Party had decided to support the proposals and advocated the establishment of "People's Committees"[6]; the Communists became enthusiastic supporters of the "Yes" committees, especially in New South Wales, and lost no opportunity of emphasising their unity with the Labour Party in the referendum. Curtin's picture appeared beside that of Miles, the Communist Party secretary.[7] (Affiliation with the Communist Party on general policy had been rejected at the June Conference of the Australian Labour Party, but the Communist support for the Powers Bill continued unabashed: the rejection, said the *Tribune*, had been only on a technicality.)[8]

Mr Lang in New South Wales was scornful of the Labour Party's acceptance of Communist support and his vigorous campaign against the proposals was directed as much against Communist Party influence as the proposals themselves. But the most emphatic and extensive opposition to the referendum came from the Constitutional League in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania, and to a less extent from organisations like the Citizens Vote No League in South Australia and the Save Our State League, Freedom League and Liberty Defence League in Western Australia. The Constitutional League was formed to combat the referendum proposals and drew to itself most of the active support for federalism and state rights guided by such people as F. A. Bland.[9] Its newspaper advertisements were the most numerous and, especially in the later stages of the campaign, occupied about as much space as the Government advertisements.

The *Referendum Constitution Alteration Act* provided for the presentation of the cases for and against to the people and to do this a pamphlet was issued on 20th April 1944 by the Chief Electoral Officer.[1] Advertisements in newspapers in support of the proposals carried the authority either of the Commonwealth Government or Evatt and Chifley.

Government members were not all active[2] although tours by Ministers were numerous enough in the small States, particularly Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia. Curtin himself did not take a very vigorous part. He spoke over the national radio network on 25th July, 9th August and 16th August and in the last talk regretted "the work, strain and illness" which had prevented him from visiting all States, and made a bitter attack on sectional interests for "distortion, lying and vilification" which had confused the issues before the public. Members of the Opposition who

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[6] *Tribune*, 27 Apr 1944.

[7] *Vote Yes for Homes and Jobs* by Len Fox, Australian Communist Party.

[8] *Tribune*, 25 May and 15 Jun 1944.

[9] F. A. Bland, CMG. Professor of Public Administration, Sydney University 1935-43, Emeritus Professor 1944-64; MHR 1951-61. B. Sydney, 24 Aug 1882. Died 9 Apr 1967.
See preface to pamphlet *Are You a Liberal?* (Nov 1944), in which the League explains that it now had an important duty "to inform the public fully on current affairs". Members were invited at 2s per annum, firms and companies at £3 3s.

[1] See pp. 6-11 "For" and 12-15 "Against". It included a copy of the proposed law (pp. 4-5).

[2] The *Courier Mail* (Brisbane) on 20th August, after the referendum, said: "There was not the effort from many of the Labour Ministers that would go into a back-country by-election."

favoured the proposals were not unequivocal in their statements and, while supporting the need for constitutional reform, tended to be critical of the method of achieving it.[3]

In general the campaign for the proposals used the legal arguments, although in Victoria and South Australia these may have been made less effective by the public discussions about differing legal interpretations. As late as 21st July there were exchanges in the press about the section dealing with regulations of a legislative character.[4] Speakers urged the public to be unprejudiced and to reject narrow State and parochial arguments: the Commonwealth was the same as the States, not some "foreign" body. People should forget parties. They urged the sincerity of the Government's intentions, and, as the campaign closed, used the spectacle of unemployment, inadequate housing, uncared-for servicemen and economic chaos in emotional appeals which, however, were matched by the appeals of their opponents who insisted that a regimented existence, nationalised industries, and the handcuffs and hangman's noose of bureaucracy would be the lot of a voter who said "Yes".

The "No" campaigners probably gained from the legal complexities, for every opinion which said that powers would be transferred temporarily one could be found that they would be transferred permanently, or that the "safeguards" on which the Government laid stress were no safeguards at all.[5] Despite the "Yes" campaigners' plea that States and Commonwealth were the same, their opponents fostered the idea of Canberra's isolation from the rest of the Commonwealth, and of the growth of a body of administrators who were unsympathetic to the needs of the general public, and who were ignorant, uninterested and inefficient in their dealings with people. Pleas to forget party were countered by playing upon the wartime experience of isolation in outlying areas. Government claims for additional powers were countered by insisting that sufficient powers already existed. It was ridiculous now to suggest a legal flaw in child endowment. It was obvious that the Government already had powers for repatriation; the depression, which had its roots in overseas events, would in no way have been averted by additional domestic government power; bureaucratic controls had already proved galling, so why prolong them; the choice of one's own house was preferable to government housing arrangements. The campaigners appealed to business men by pointing to threats of nationalisation; to women by pointing to queues and shortages; to workers by threats of industrial conscription; and to the public generally by suggesting that

[3] Spender thought it "inexplicable why the Government had refused to indicate how it proposed to use powers . . . if granted. . . . Voters should have been given opportunity to grant certain powers and to exclude others." (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 Jul 1944.) The *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), a Murdoch paper, represented the same situation on the "No" side. It favoured rejection only as an "indication to the Government that its demands go too far". (13 Aug 1944.)

[4] The *Advertiser* (Adelaide)—between Ham and Fullagar, and Rudall and Ligertwood, on Section 4.

[5] The Government Printer published a 59-page booklet by Evatt: *Post-War Reconstruction. Temporary Alterations of the Constitution. Notes on the Fourteen Powers and the Three Safeguards.* A pamphlet reproduced an address by J. V. Barry, KC, given in Melbourne on 9th March, with a foreword by Sir Isaac Isaacs, which urged adoption of the proposals. The level of such publications was probably suited to only a small number of the voters; campaigning for the general public was at a more popular level.

repatriation was only a bait for other powers, that haste must be deplored, that powers should be sought by agreement and an elected convention. In any case a vote for "No" did not entirely reject the need for constitutional reform; it merely indicated that the voter did not like all the present proposals for reform.

The proposals were rejected at the referendum held on 19th August 1944. There was a Commonwealth majority for "No" and only two States —South Australia and Western Australia—returned a majority for "Yes".[6] Queensland and New South Wales which had adopted the earlier Powers Bill of the 1942 Convention returned a majority for "No".

Relating the results to the state of the parties in the House of Representatives, and to the election results, how did the Government, which had got in on a landslide only twelve months before, fare in this request to the people for greater powers in peacetime? All Opposition electorates and the electorates of the two Independents (Coles in Henty and Wilson in Wimmera) rejected the proposals. (Coles and Wilson had favoured the proposals.) All the electorates which changed to Labour at the 1943 elections save two (Adelaide and Swan, in Western Australia) rejected the proposals. Of 35 electorates which had returned Labour at both the 1940 and 1943 elections, 15 rejected the proposals. Out of the total of 74 electorates only 22 voted "Yes"; in Queensland and Tasmania all electorates returned "No" votes.

Curtin "like the late Mr Andrew Fisher and Mr W. M. Hughes" was "disappointed but not surprised at the result". He had wanted to avoid a referendum in wartime but the agreement at the convention had come to nothing because of State decisions. The referendum had been made under all kinds of difficulties "and was prejudiced by the Commonwealth's preoccupation with the war and by the irrelevancies which have marked every referendum that has been submitted since the federation was established".[7] He and other commentators thought the results interesting in that the States whose two Premiers had been most insistent in opposing the proposals had voted for them (South Australia and Western Australia), and the two States whose Parliaments had passed the earlier Powers Bill had rejected the proposals (New South Wales and Queensland).

Perhaps the most significant factor in the rejection of the request for powers was public dislike of "controls". With the outcome of the war no longer in doubt the urgency which the Government claimed was less credible.

The "planners" had overplayed their hands. Then, too, the referendum was perhaps the beginning of that post-war political contest between

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[6] The percentages in all States were:

	Yes	No
New South Wales . .	45.44	54.56
Victoria	49.31	50.69
Queensland	36.52	63.48
South Australia . . .	50.64	49.36
Western Australia . .	52.25	47.75
Tasmania	38.92	61.08

The overall majority for "No" was 342,018. Informal votes numbered 56,633.

[7] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 86, p. 28.

private enterprise and socialism. The basic differences in economic doctrine to which Menzies had referred in his second reading speech on the Bill were becoming already a central political issue.

6—ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGE

By the beginning of 1944 the transformation of Australian civilian life in wartime was complete. The Government was controlling and directing the life of the nation to an extent never experienced before. With a large majority in both Houses of Parliament and by means of chairmanship that often disregarded convention it controlled Parliament. Although major legislation continued to come from Parliament, the legislative function was exercised over a much wider field by the executive by means of statutory orders.

The most significant change which war had wrought was in the legal instruments by which the Government gave effect to its decisions. This growing body of administrative law was enforced and, in practice, usually interpreted as well as applied by a growing body of the agents of administration whose actions were less subject to scrutiny than in peacetime and less restrained by the conventions of the peacetime Public Service.

By August 1944, when the Government submitted its proposals for the transfer of 14 additional powers to the Commonwealth, the War Legislation Service accounted for 1,736 Statutory Rules issued in the following years:

	National Security Act	Other	Total
25 Aug 1939 to Dec 1939 . .	41	69	110
Jan 1940 to Dec 1940 . . .	149	147	296
Jan 1941 to Dec 1941 . . .	200	127	327
Jan 1942 to Dec 1942 . . .	359	198	557
Jan 1943 to Dec 1943 . . .	215	102	317
Jan 1944 to Aug 1944 . . .	80	49	129

Some of these had been held invalid by the Courts and some had been replaced by later orders but most of them were still in force. There were also 4,324 items covering orders, delegations and proclamations. Of these the major part consisted of 1,684 orders and 146 declarations of the Prices Commissioner and 606 declarations by the Customs authorities. There were a very large number of orders covering materials and manufactures.[8]

This mass of wartime legislation made by the executive indicated not only a change in the method of government but also a great growth of governmental activity. This growth was also revealed in the figures of employment by the Commonwealth Government. While public employment by State Governments remained almost stationary and employment in local government declined, employment by the Commonwealth Govern-

[8] See *Index*, 30th August 1944—War Legislation Service, Law Book Company.

Today's Armstrong



Armstrong in Argus *(Melbourne) 27 May 1944*

The National Security Regulations became so voluminous and so complex that the citizen needed a host of lawyers to help him find a way through them.

ment trebled between 1939 and 1945 and the numbers in the Commonwealth Public Service doubled. From 12 departments at the end of 1938, plus 15 primary commodity boards or committees, three commissions and 12 other branches such as Taxation, Commonwealth Railways, the Tariff Board, Public Service Board and the Bureau of Census and Statistics, the administration had grown to 25 departments, 23 primary commodity boards and committees, six commissions and 22 branches. The level of total public employment by the Commonwealth rose from 68,500 in 1939 to 192,000 in 1945 and in the Commonwealth Public Service from 47,043 to 99,484.

The formal totals for "permanent" and "temporary or exempt" employees which appeared in the meagre reports of the Public Service Board showed the annual growth as follows:[9]

	Permanent	Temporary or Exempt	Total
30th June 1939 . .	32,429	14,614	47,043
30th June 1940 . .	34,201	19,240	53,441
30th June 1941 . .	36,192	24,297	60,489
30th June 1942(*a*)			
30th June 1943 . .	38,108	49,931	88,039
30th June 1944 . .	38,760	56,980	95,740
30th June 1945 . .	38,944	60,540	99,484

(*a*) Not available

While this increase reflects an expansion of activity, it should not be assumed that every additional member was a "bureaucrat" in the popular sense of the term. Many of the appointments were of married women and boys for jobs such as typist, telephonist and messenger, either replacing those able-bodied men who had been released for war service or providing routine services for newly-appointed seniors.

These developments did not take place without some criticism. It had been customary that under authority of Acts of the Parliament Ministers might issue regulations and orders and they might delegate power to issue orders. The safeguards had usually been found, however, first in the expectation that Parliament would be very careful about the terms in which it gave to Ministers a power to make regulations and that it would be extremely cautious about giving authority to delegate that power. Furthermore regulations had to be presented to Parliament within a stipulated period and it was expected that Parliament would examine them scrupulously and reject them if they went beyond the purpose Parliament had when passing the Act. Second, it was assumed that the Courts would be accessible and that, on a case being brought before them, they could interpret the law and could declare a regulation invalid if the making of it was not fully covered by the provisions of the Act of Parliament. Third, it was expected that Ministers and public servants could be trusted

[9] Hasluck, Vol I, p. 420, remarks: "For less understandable reasons of economy, no Public Service list was published and the Public Service Board ceased to present annual reports." This refers to published reports. The last was No. 17 (for the year ended 30th June 1940). Nos. 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 were either typewritten or duplicated but not printed. With No. 23 (year ended 30th June 1947) printing was resumed. (1942 and 1943 were combined in No. 19.)

to observe certain conventions. These might perhaps be summarised by saying that they would use regulations as a means of applying the provisions of the Act and only to the minimum extent it was necessary to do so and they would not use them to enlarge or even interpret the scope of the Act. It is doubtful whether in wartime all these safeguards were operating in 1944 as they would have operated in peacetime. It is doubtful whether any of them could have operated in a normal way under the overwhelming spate of delegated legislation.

Meanwhile this great body of law was being made without prior public debate and without scrutiny of it except by those directly interested in exercising the desired legal power and by the poor toads under the harrow who felt a point only when it hit them in the back.

By the first half of 1944 dismay at the situation was becoming apparent, and sections of the people were voicing doubts and criticism of the regulations and of the working of the safeguards which were supposed to exist.[1] They said that regulations before the Parliament were too numerous to receive appropriate attention. The sittings of Parliament were irregular. The delegation of power by Ministers was dangerous since it transferred responsibility farther away from the real point where it should rest—the Parliament and its executive. The testing of regulations before a Court was costly, and only in exceptional cases was a litigant prepared to take such matters as far as the High Court. In any case such challenges could prove of little value where "unfettered discretion" was given to an administrative authority.[2] Government authorities sometimes even assumed the role of "interpretation"—a privilege which should be reserved only for the courts. The "trustworthiness" of administrators could no longer be presumed in view of the tremendous growth of wartime staffs composed of persons who were not public servants in the pre-war sense, and whose quality, simply because wartime necessity restricted the people available, was likely to be uncertain.

"Bureaucracy" became a popular taunt. At the referendum in August 1944 opponents of the transfer of additional powers to the Commonwealth insisted that bureaucratic control was the greatest danger; that it outweighed any of the benefits to be gained by giving a government the power it thought necessary to cope with the problems of return to a peacetime economy.[3]

Legal opinion was concerned about the lack of an "ordered concept of administrative law such as exists in continental countries and the United

[1] For example see articles by the Constitutional Association (F. R. Louat, *Daily Telegraph*, 15 May 1944), A. K. Stout and D. Maughan (Law Council), *Daily Telegraph*, 16 May.

[2] See R. Else-Mitchell's article in the *Australian Law Journal*, Jul 1943 and later reprinted in *Public Administration*, Vol 4, and G. Sawer, *Public Administration*, Vol 5, p. 15, speaking in Victoria, 16 Dec.

[3] In a series appearing in *Public Administration*, from Vol 5, Sawer reviewed decisions "affecting public administration". In December 1943 (Vol 5, p. 15) he wrote: "Government . . . is becoming more and more a matter of making and unmaking administrative regulations and administrative discretions. If the bureaucrat wants a power he gets it under guise of a National Security regulation. If he gets into trouble while exercising that power he can get out of trouble by making another regulation. The ordinary courts come into this process only in a minor way. They are from time to time asked what some word or phrase in a regulation means. If the relevant bureaucrat dislikes the opinion of the court on that question he proceeds to pass another regulation defining the word or phrase according to his heart's desire."

States"; England and Australia had been content to rely on "the rule of law—common law".[4] In the view of one writer, England had a fairly coherent body of principles on the validity and interpretation of statutes and municipal by-laws but was "only just beginning to develop such a body of principles with respect to the regulations, orders, etc. made by departments of State and their attendant boards, commissions, etc. It is not only the lawyers who are at fault in this matter. Parliament and the Executive are also to blame for their failure to use uniform terminology and uniform methods of procedure in relation to such delegated legislation."[5]

Lawyers' suggestions for improvement included greater caution in delegation of legislative power, a Standing Committee to consider and report to both Houses on delegated legislation, and strict observance of statutory provisions relating to public notices, regulations and orders. "It is questionable whether these reforms would achieve anything of importance without a reform of the administrative system" involving establishment of administrative tribunals (for review) and recruitment of more capable administrators.[6]

The Attorney-General, Evatt, was sensitive to the views of his fellow lawyers, and as a politician he had also encountered the opposition to his campaign for greater powers.

Consequently, in June 1944 he established "an independent advisory body", to which he undertook to refer the questions of reviewing, repealing or modifying—in the light of the changing circumstances of the war—existing regulations and other subordinate legislation under the *National Security Act*. The committee comprised three lawyers, with A. D. Fraser,[7] Labour member for Eden-Monaro, as its chairman.[8] This committee also invited one of the more outspoken critics of the growth of administrative control, Mr Else-Mitchell,[9] to address it. Its first report was before Evatt on 15th July. It stated that it had not looked at the National Security Regulations in detail but "averment and onus of proof provisions" had been referred to it by Evatt, and two other matters—"the use of answers obtained by compulsory interrogation, and the desirability of establishing reviewing authorities" had been examined. These matters "appeared to the Committee to be of such importance that, having regard to its function . . . the Committee felt it was desirable that it should examine them forthwith and make its views available to you without delay".[1] The committee's recommendations on general averment included the repeal of Regulation 15 of the Tea Control Regulations and amendment of Regulation 32A of the Prices Regulations. On specific evidentiary provisions it recommended repeal or amendment of Rationing, Liquid

[4] Else-Mitchell, op. cit.

[5] Sawer, *Public Administration*, Vol 5, p. 15.

[6] Else-Mitchell, op. cit.

[7] A. D. Fraser. MHR 1943-66 and since 1969. B. Charlton, Vic, 18 Sep 1902.

[8] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 83, p. 43. Members: D. Maughan, KC, President of the Law Council of Australia; J. V. Barry, KC; F. Louat, LL.D, President of the Constitutional Association of New South Wales.

[9] Hon Mr Justice R. Else-Mitchell. Secretary, Commonwealth Rationing Commission 1943-45; editor *Australian Law Journal* 1946-58; Judge, Supreme Court of NSW since 1958. Barrister-at-law; b. Belmore, NSW, 20 Sep 1914.

[1] "War Regulations Advisory Committee (First Report)", p. 2.

Fuel and General Regulations and others. Evidential provisions in ministerial orders should be revoked and, if need for them could be established, they should be made by Statutory Rules. On the use of answers compulsorily obtained the committee's view was that when the answers were to questions administered under regulations they should not be admissible in civil or criminal proceedings except in circumstances which gave the defendant adequate protection. Finally, as a method of improving the operation of regulations and orders which authorised the cancellation of licences to carry on businesses, reviewing authorities should be established to review any such cancellation.

On 22nd July Curtin announced that amending regulations to give effect to most of the committee's recommendations would be made. The recommendation that reviewing authorities be established would be examined to find the practicable method of giving effect to it and some recommendations on prosecutions for breaches of security and on subversive associations required consideration.

In later months the committee presented four other reports, the last in June 1945. Among recommendations which were significant for the administering of regulations was a recommendation that greater efforts should be made to give publicity to regulations and orders: the manual of National Security Legislation should be published as soon as possible and future editions brought out at intervals of not less than six months; regulations and orders should be sent to sub-treasuries for distribution within 24 hours of being gazetted; prices, war organisation of industry and rationing regulations and orders should be available in book form as were those for manpower. The practice of employing agents to appear before tribunals was deplored. By June 1945 the committee's reports had become concerned mainly with the repeal of regulations thought obsolete, and with the difficulties and discrepancies in Landlord and Tenant Regulations.

This committee did good work in reminding the Government and the public of the principles which were involved and its major achievement was in drawing attention to particular injustices or disabilities and having them removed. The problems of the state of mind of the administrators themselves and the misconceptions they had of civil rights and personal liberties could be dealt with less readily. The populace itself had become habituated to government control and was becoming accustomed to the professional planning of their lives and activities. But they could not stand something they called the "bureaucrat". To some this was a clerk at an office counter who delayed an application for a permit; to others he was the assistant secretary who wrote an unaccommodating reply to a letter; to many he was the commissioner, or deputy commissioner, controller or deputy-controller, director-general or regional director—a person who had complete authority to give or take something that they wanted to receive or to keep; a person from whom there was no appeal, a person who appeared to them to acknowledge no limits to his own knowledge

and to accept no qualification of his authority, a man who lived in his own world of "plans" and "implementation" and was linked to heaven by "lines of policy".

The popular view of the bureaucrat was exaggerated and distorted but it had some foundation in the fact that the wartime shift in power to the executive, the wartime necessity for the exercise of authority in a more peremptory way than would have been accepted in peacetime, and the wider spread of governmental authority into the life of the community had been accompanied by a necessary recruitment into public office of persons who were inexperienced in public administration and unaware of the conventions of public service.

There were other factors in the situation. The *Public Service Act* provided (Section 55) for disciplinary action. A regulation under the Act prohibited officers "seeking the influence or interest of any person in order to obtain promotion, transfer or other advantage".[2] Since a great many people administering wartime government controls were beyond the provisions of the Act, they were beyond, also, those safeguards which the Act had been designed to provide for the good of the service and the public generally. It became a bustling, thrusting service and even the permanent officers were infected. With new and highly responsible jobs being created, it was a time of rapid promotion for the man who met the need. To attract talent from outside, new positions were created on higher classifications.

Another change in the character of the Public Service which occurred as a result of wartime administration was the disappearance of the anonymity which before the war had been the accepted rule. Some senior administrators became better known than the legislators who provided the laws for them to administer or even than the Ministers who had to take responsibility for their actions. Not all these figures were professional public servants; indeed some of the most senior of the permanent public servants finished the war as anonymously as they started and without the high-sounding titles which a number of the new positions acquired. Another side to the emergence of administrators as public figures was the development of "public relations" work by departments themselves.

The rapid growth in these circumstances also set problems for the Public Service itself and for its post-war reorganisation to meet the conditions of peacetime. Unfortunately little progress had been made towards the post-war adjustment before the termination of hostilities. It was as late as 24th May 1945 when Cabinet approved the appointment of a committee to investigate the future organisation and personnel of Commonwealth departments.[3] This committee, known as the Pinner Committee, made its first report on 24th July and between then and 10th

[2] The 1943 Report, p. 7, deplored "failure on the part of some officers to comply with the regulation provision". The Commonwealth Public Service Clerical Association journal of September 1943 was quoted admonishing members who had disregarded the regulation.

[3] Full Cabinet Agendum 842. The committee was appointed on 2nd June. Chairman, J. T. Pinner; A. A. Fitzgerald, plus the representative of the organisation being examined.

January 1946 it submitted 53—the total of departments, sections of departments, commissions, boards and directorates which it had examined. The final report was made on 14th January 1946.

The committee's terms of reference were:

1. Make a general review of the civil staffing of wartime activities of Commonwealth departments, boards, commissions, etc., including those not functioning under the Public Service Act;
2. Advise which, if any, of the present functions are of a permanent character or likely to stand for an appreciable time and for which it would be desirable to provide permanent officers;
3. Bring to notice, as a result of its inquiries, any cases in which it considers that it would be desirable to secure the services on a permanent basis of particular persons now employed by the Commonwealth on loan from State Services or Instrumentalities or who have been recruited from Universities or private business sources;
4. Advise whether temporary staff seen in the course of the committee's inquiries, whose duties bring them into direct contact with the public, are suitable for the particular functions to which they are allotted.[4]

Its purpose mainly was that of "demobilisation" and improvement and reorganisation of the service generally. Departments were ultimately to give information about reduction in numbers after the end or modification of wartime activities, lessening work, changes in existing procedures and improved methods.[5]

By the time the committee was only an eighth of the way through its intended list peace had come in the Pacific but the later inquiries only strengthened the significant recommendation which the committee placed before the Prime Minister on 24th July. During the war, boards and government organisations had been set up outside the control or supervision of the Public Service Board. The degree to which the *Public Service Act* applied to these staffs varied, but the anomalies in classification, in salaries and "conditions of employment" had led to dissatisfaction and, in order to remove the anomalies and causes of dissatisfaction, all salaries and other conditions of employment in respect of new appointments to wartime instrumentalities should be subject to the approval of the Commonwealth Public Service Board. Moreover the Board should exercise a "continuing general oversight" over the fulfilment of such recommendations of the committee as the Government approved and adopted.[6]

In certain old-established departments there were, as there had always been, special categories which were not subject to the *Public Service Act*—for example printers, valuers and inspectors in the Treasury and judges, court criers and reporters in Attorney-General's—but the wartime expansion of government employment had produced a situation in which, for example, 22 boards, committees and controlling authorities of the Department of Commerce employed staff under relevant National Security

[4] "Committee of Review: Civil Staffing of Wartime Activities. First Report, 1945", p. 2.

[5] The First Report (p. 5) said that "verbal recommendation" through Calwell had led to a recommendation that the various sections dealing with housing should be combined—and Cabinet had decided that the Department of Works should become the Department of Works and Housing.

[6] First Report, p. 6.

Regulations. The Department of Post-War Reconstruction employees, though employed "in pursuance of the *Public Service Act*", were exempt from its provisions. Most of the temporary employees of the Departments of Munitions and Aircraft Production were appointed under Supply and Development or Aircraft Production Regulations. National Security Regulations were the authority for employing staff for the Rationing Commission and the Tea Control Board of the Department of Trade and Customs. Employees of the Department of Transport were not subject to the Act. In the Department of Supply and Shipping the seven shipping and stevedoring authorities, the Clothing Factories, Coal Commissioner and Minerals Production Directorate were subject to relevant National Security Regulations.[7]

The Public Service Board's own Report of February 1945 urged that

> close attention should be given to the extent to which the practice of setting up activities employing civilian staffs, but not coming within the scope of the Public Service Act, should be continued. The creation of a number of activities each with independent "staffing" authority has made for lack of uniformity and caused many difficulties. The Public Service Arbitrator and the Board over a period of years have built up standards of remuneration and conditions of service, and much unrest is created when these standards are departed from by individual activities for work which differs little in nature and value from that done in departments working under the Public Service Act. Service Organisations are in accord with the Board that there should be a common authority determinating matters of classification, etc. for all civilian employees of the Commonwealth. The multiplicity of "Authorities" also provides anomalies in other directions. The Public Service Arbitrator, Public Service Departments generally, Public Service Organisations and the Board have had close regard to the provisions of the National Security (Economic Organization) Regulations which "peg" remuneration, but a different interpretation must be read into the "pegging" Regulations by some other authorities in view of action taken. The best interests of the community and the future welfare of the Service require an alteration in the present set-up of many different "staffing" authorities.[8]

Beyond this there were enormous problems of reclassification and of the management of the service. War gave the Commonwealth Public Service a heritage of troubles. It also introduced what a traditionalist would regard as some bad habits. It brought some gains. One was the acquisition of experience and a more enterprising outlook. Some of the most senior of the career public servants in the post-war period had gained a great deal by exercising heavier responsibility in wartime and came into the post-war period much better equipped and technically more expert than they might otherwise have been. The service also acquired some competent men who had been drawn into government service during the war and remained when it was over. The pre-war conservatism about the value of University graduates in the service had been broken down and the need for more highly-qualified specialists and for more highly-qualified general purpose men in a modern service had been realised. Although the standard salaries for classified positions were still low by comparison with employ-

[7] "Employees of Commonwealth Authorities Who Are Not Subject to the Commonwealth Public Service Act"—document attached to Committee's Report, Prime Minister's Department File No. BK3/1/1.

[8] *Twentieth Report (for year ended 30th June 1944), dated 3rd February 1945*, p. 3.

ment outside the service, the course had been set for fixing at least some of the pay of public servants not as those of clerks in a business concern but as those of the salaried executive officers.

By and large, however, up to the end of hostilities the effects of the war on Australian government had been harmful more often than beneficial. Authority had been strengthened and its mind had been contaminated by power. The gap between it and the populace had widened. Its observance of the basic principles of democratic rule and of civil rights had become inconstant. It was apt to see the exigencies of wartime as the norms of administration.

CHAPTER 9

THE LAST YEAR—JUNE 1944-JUNE 1945

1—THE CHANGING WAR EFFORT

DURING the last year of hostilities the decisions of the Australian Government on the Australian war effort were still dominated by the problems of manpower. The competing demands for manpower for the Australian armed services, for the restoration of Australian industry to meet the anticipated needs of peacetime and for supply to American forces under lend-lease were now added to by the expected requirements of the British fleet which was to operate against Japan in consequence of the decisions of the Quebec Conference. The way in which the Government decided between these rival claims produced in the closing stages of the war a major issue over the role of the Australian Army and a political controversy that tarnished victory.

As the manpower situation gives the background to that controversy, it calls for further discussion.[1]

The general review of Australian manpower had been proceeding since July 1944. In accordance with the procedure originally proposed by Curtin, the approved report of the Defence Committee was sent in turn to the War Commitments Committee and Production Executive and their reports and recommendations were brought before the Advisory War Council on 28th September 1944. In the meantime the War Cabinet had also directed Production Executive to deal with a number of other questions in relation to labour for munitions, export policy, the rations scale of the United States forces and labour for sugar production. Production Executive, by its own decision, also consulted with Food Executive on various matters.

Production Executive was always an industrious and painstaking body and the result of its labour was a further comprehensive document: "Review of the Australian Industrial War Effort." The Advisory War Council had to ask for an adjournment to study it and in consequence the War Cabinet reached "provisional conclusions" on the main questions and left them to be endorsed by the Council at its next meeting.[2]

The review pointed out that the manpower budget showed that, during 1944-45, 155,350 men and 37,700 women were required for essential purposes but only 117,650 men and 26,000 women were available. Thus the supply of labour was insufficient by a wide margin without making any provision for British forces. The War Commitments Committee recommended the following reductions in "commitments or requirements"—a 20 per cent cut in the planned expansion of the housing programme; a 40 per cent cut in planned expansion of exports; elimination of the United

[1] See above, Chapter 5, and Chapter 7, Section 3, for earlier references.

[2] War Cabinet Minute 3808, 27 Sep; War Cabinet Minute 3858 and Advisory War Council Minute 1437, 19 Oct; War Cabinet Agendum 473/1944; Advisory War Council Agendum 17/1944.

States prefabrication programme and progressive reduction in supplies of building materials to American forces; a decision not to accelerate merchant and naval shipbuilding; arrangements for American forces to ship larger supplies of processed foods from the United States; further deferment of all but the most urgent arrears of maintenance of transport and public utilities; a 70 per cent cut in the demands for personnel by Commonwealth and State Government departments; and a 30 per cent cut in the expansion of miscellaneous civilian supplies proposed by the Civilian Requirements Board. The disadvantage at which Australia would be placed after the defeat of Germany by reason of her role in the war against Japan would be very greatly increased if any substantial provision had to be made for British forces based on Australia, however welcome such forces might be from other viewpoints. In the absence of information about likely British demands the War Commitments Committee had been obliged to neglect this possibility in its manpower budget. Production Executive had decided that the War Cabinet should be informed that the recommended manpower allocations for indirect war and civilian requirements were already much lower than was desirable, and should not be curtailed to make provision for British forces.

Production Executive then set out a series of recommendations. In the first of these a recommended allocation of available manpower was set out in detail, largely in accordance with the percentage reductions mentioned above. The War Cabinet approved this provisionally, subject to consideration by the Minister for War Organisation of Industry about allocation of manpower made available as a result of curtailment of manufacture of torpedoes and cessation of manufacture of two aircraft types. It decided provisionally that no new manpower should be allocated to shipbuilding, and no further action should be taken regarding compulsory recruitment of women for the services.[3]

The War Cabinet provisionally approved a recommendation that the further review to be made by the Defence Committee and War Commitments Committee should be on the basis that at least 40,000 special releases should be made from the services in addition to the 45,000 already directed by War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet provisionally approved a recommendation that the Manpower Directorate, when carrying out the proposed allocation, should give special attention to the need to provide additional labour for the rubber industry in view of the effect of the use of synthetic rubber on production with the existing manpower, and to the need for labour to ensure improved clothing production, and remedy the serious deficiencies in transport maintenance.

The War Cabinet approved a recommendation that the 21,000 men allocated for rural industry should include 8,000 for the dairying industry as a matter of urgency since the flush season was approaching; and that any increase in recruitment by the navy to man additional ships should

[3] War Cabinet Minute 3523.

be within the monthly quota of 3,000 recruits for all services as laid down by War Cabinet.

Among other recommendations agreed to by the War Cabinet was one that the supply of prefabricated structures to the American forces should be terminated as soon as possible. It approved a series of detailed proposals for reducing American demands subject to consultation with MacArthur "as to the relation of the time factor for the proposed restrictions to alternative means of meeting urgent operational needs of the United States forces".

Production Executive recommended that any provision for British forces should be made not at the expense of indirect war and civilian allocations but by further reduction of allocations to United States forces, additional releases from the services, and any further reductions in the industrial demands of the services which might eventuate as a result of additional releases from the services. These recommendations were deferred for consideration after the Defence Committee had completed its review of the United Kingdom's requirements for basing a force on Australia.

On 19th October the Advisory War Council approved the "provisional conclusions" of War Cabinet on the Production Executive's proposals and the provisional conclusions became decisions of War Cabinet.

On 25th September[4] Churchill had given Curtin a "broad picture" of the main requirements of the British Pacific Fleet. These were:

(*a*) Use and expansion of existing ship repair facilities at Sydney and other ports on the east coast of Australia.

(*b*) Development of existing British storage facilities for all types of stores, chiefly in the Sydney and Brisbane area, but also to a lesser extent in the Darwin area and minor Queensland ports. Small facilities may also be required at Fremantle.

(*c*) Establishment of necessary assembly, repairs and storage facilities for naval aircraft chiefly in the Sydney and Brisbane area and to a limited extent in the Darwin area.

(*d*) Provision for accommodation and hospital accommodation for the personnel who will be concerned with the above undertakings and with the administration of the Fleet.

It was intended to make the fullest possible use of installations which the Americans would vacate as they moved forward in the Pacific. It was suggested that the detailed arrangements should be worked out between the British and Australian Chiefs of Staff and between the Admiralty and Australian Naval Board.

Curtin replied next day: "You can rely on our complete cooperation in regard to the provision of facilities in Australia to enable the main British fleet to operate against Japan."

After a discussion with the Director-General of War Organisation of Industry on 29th September the Defence Committee recommended that a Joint Administrative Planning Sub-committee should be formed to examine further the British requirements for the maintenance of forces in the Pacific and Australia's capacity to meet them, and to report to

[4] Winch No. 11.

the Defence Committee, with the Directors-General of War Organisation of Industry and of Allied Works co-opted, together with representatives of such other civil departments and related sub-committees as might be needed. The chairman should be the Navy representative. On 13th October Curtin informed Dedman that he approved of these proposals.

In October various revised estimates of the British naval forces destined for the Pacific and the phases of their transfer were received. On 8th November[5] Churchill informed Curtin of the proposed build-up in some detail. Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser would command the British Pacific Fleet which should arrive in Australia towards the end of December, and to begin with should comprise 2 fast battleships, 4 fleet carriers, 6 cruisers including two from the New Zealand Navy and 21 destroyers and other vessels. Its strength would be rapidly built up and by July 1945 should consist of 4 fast battleships, 6 fleet carriers, 4 light fleet carriers, 16 cruisers (including two New Zealand and one Canadian), 40 fleet destroyers and about 90 escorts, and would be supported by a fleet train of repair, maintenance and supply ships.

It would be necessary for a Vice-Admiral (Administration) to be stationed at Melbourne as a permanent representative in Australia of the Commander-in-Chief of the fleet. He and his staff would make arrangements with the Naval Board for the fleet's requirements to be met, communicating with the Australian Government through the Minister for the Navy when necessary. He would be the administrative authority for the Royal Navy depot in Sydney.

In November Curtin became concerned at the growing estimates of the labour requirements of the fleet. On 9th November he cabled to Bruce[6] that, although Australia's acute position in regard to manpower and materials had been stressed to the United Kingdom, Australia was being asked to provide 4,875 men in respect of supply items and 8,700 in respect of maintenance and repair; and there was a further request for 3,860 Australian service personnel for shore facilities for aircraft of the Royal Navy. These requests were in addition to extensive demands on Australian labour resources for works. A recent review by the War Cabinet indicated that after apportioning the 45,000 special releases from the services and, allowing for routine discharges, there would remain at 30th June 1945 a manpower deficiency of about 50,000 for high priority requirements, without taking into account any appreciable contribution for the United Kingdom forces.

There was a possibility that the Admiralty was viewing the matter from the angle that their requirements should be met, to the greatest extent practicable, from Australian production even if this involved curtailment of other high priority commitments. "Without in any way retracting from our assurance that the Government intends to make as full a contribution as practicable to the needs of the United Kingdom forces based on

[5] Telegram No. 311.
[6] Telegram No. 170.

Australia, it is felt that liability to misunderstanding of the extent of our available capacity could be removed and advantages generally accrue, if you could discuss this subject with the United Kingdom authorities."

By 15th November the War Cabinet had approved, as works to be put in hand at once, the construction of a camp at Bunnerong to hold repair and storehouse personnel and the construction of a depot at Warwick Farm (together about £50,000), the construction of berthing facilities at Brisbane (£330,000) and facilities for the Fleet Air Arm at Nowra, Bankstown, Schofields and Jervis Bay (£983,000).[7] The War Cabinet noted the report of the Director-General of Allied Works and the Works Priorities Sub-Committee that the projects would delay for about three months release of further men by the Allied Works Council some of whom would otherwise be available for the housing programme, and the naval projects could proceed only at the expense of that programme.

On 27th November Bruce replied to Curtin's telegram of the 9th, saying that he had told the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr A. V. Alexander, that Australia's manpower problem was even more acute than the United Kingdom's. The task of a special committee of the Australian War Cabinet appointed to consider how far it could help had been rendered impossible by a steady flow of supplementary requirements. The Admiralty appeared almost to be trying to shift some of their own manpower embarrassments on to Australia's already overburdened shoulders. "All this," Bruce wrote, "Alexander took quite well. He repudiated any idea of trying to unload their troubles on to us, said that the Admiralty fully realised Australia's manpower difficulties and stated that the sole object of their telegrams had been to discover what men Australia could provide so that the best solution could be reached of the manpower problems involved in implementing the OCTAGON decisions." Later Alexander had sent him a note about the Admiralty's position. This declared that the Admiralty had difficulty in finding men for shore service in Australia in view of the manpower situation. The Admiralty had been influenced by the consideration that maximum Australian assistance would alleviate the shipping shortage and reduce the loss of man hours while men were awaiting passage or on passage from England. After enlarging further on the Admiralty's manpower problems, the note said that the Admiralty felt it was best to put its cards on the table and state its full requirements at the outset.

The recommendations of the Joint Administrative Planning Sub-committee of Production Executive came before the War Cabinet on 7th December. It recommended various measures for limiting the allocation of manpower to Royal Navy undertakings. Thus it proposed that no undertaking be entered into at present for more than the existing allocation of 2,000 men towards the 4,700 needed to make up deficiencies in naval repair establishments, though later it might be possible to provide 1,000 more.

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[7] War Cabinet Minute 3862.

The Royal Navy should undertake its own aircraft engine and airframe repairs, apart from temporary assistance by the R.A.A.F. in the initial period. The Royal Navy programme would be carried out by the Allied Works Council on the basis that no revision need yet be made in its labour force. Apart from minor items Admiralty food requirements would be met from Australian resources, the total estimated value to the end of 1945 being £10,657,000.

The sub-committee advised other limitations and recommended that General MacArthur's attention be directed to the desirability of making substantial reductions in the employment of Australian civilians by American forces and be invited to nominate a representative to discussions that might be held under the auspices of the War Commitments Committee.

The sub-committee's recommendations totalled 18. The War Cabinet approved them subject to some qualifications. Concerning the employment of Australian civilians by United States forces, the War Cabinet decided that the appropriate course was consultation between the Prime Minister and General MacArthur to pave the way for discussion by the War Commitments Committee with General MacArthur's representative.

On 19th December Churchill informed Curtin that, although one battleship—H.M.S. *Howe*—two cruisers and a flotilla of destroyers would arrive in Sydney at the end of the year, the main carrier force would attack Sumatran oil refineries before going to Australia and this would delay the arrival in Australia of the main body of the fleet by two or three weeks.

Raids on the oil refineries were duly made in December and January and on 8th February the Australian Chief of the Naval Staff reported at a meeting of the Advisory War Council that units of the British Pacific Fleet including the battleship *King George V* and four large carriers—*Victorious, Illustrious, Indefatigable* and *Indomitable*—had arrived at Fremantle and were then on their way to Sydney.[8]

On 9th January 1945 War Cabinet had approved of recommendations of the Defence Committee reducing the scale of coast and anti-aircraft defences at Darwin, Sydney and Fremantle[9] and in succeeding months, consequent on continued improvement in the strategical situation, further reductions were made by the Defence Committee, the saving of about 3,250 personnel being applied to carrying out the Government's manpower policy for releases to industry.[1]

[8] A British official historian has written: "It was indeed doubtful if the Fleet could usefully have arrived sooner. The base, whose details had been settled only in October, had still largely to be created; and, as Fraser reported, the essentials for maintenance were barely ready. Nor was the employment of the Fleet at all certain. Nimitz was prepared, as soon as its training and supply permitted, to include it as a task force in one of the American Fleets in 'his most advanced operations', and to provide facilities for a forward base at Manus in the Admiralty Islands on the same basis as for American ships. But Manus, whose position as a forward base was in any case not ideal for operations some 2,000 miles to the north, would not be ready for some months, and Nimitz was also obliged to emphasise that with his other commitments he could offer no help in supply or in the provision of fuel. He estimated therefore that the British Pacific Fleet would not be ready for action before April 1945." (J. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol VI (1956), pp. 222-3.)

[9] War Cabinet Minute 4002.

[1] War Cabinet Agendum 337/45, 30 Jul 1945; approved by War Cabinet Minute 4374, 18 Aug 1945.

On 10th February 1945 the Minister for Munitions presented a survey of munitions production to War Cabinet showing, in respect of ammunition and weapons and equipment, the sources of supply that had been developed, the annual capacity, and the production. The purpose of preparing this survey was to enable the Government to determine what manufacturing should be maintained after the war and, incidental to that question, to consider the transfer of space and plant in commercial munitions factories to other purposes if they were no longer required. Both these matters had been in the mind of the Government since the munitions adjustments of August 1943, while since July 1944 the Department had been conscientiously attempting, in pursuance of a ministerial directive, to concentrate munitions production in Government factories as far as practicable. After considering the survey on 27th February 1945, War Cabinet referred the whole question to the Defence Committee for further examination.[2]

In a survey of the progress made in releases from the services up to the end of 1944, the War Commitments Committee found that routine releases of men from July to December 1944 had totalled about 25,000 and of women about 5,000. Special releases from 1st September to 31st December had totalled only 14,972 compared with the target of 20,000 which War Cabinet had set for the period. Against this, however, the three services had been unable to obtain the approved quota of new recruits, only 14,428 men and 2,865 women having been recruited, compared with quotas of 18,000 and 6,120.

War Cabinet accepted a service viewpoint that, "as a general principle and subject to mutual agreement between the Manpower Directorate and the service concerned", a deficiency in service recruitment should be allowed to offset the deficiency in the number of special releases, and vice versa. Thus it would be regarded that the services had yielded up 19,548 to the end of December and that, to achieve the total objective of the release of 45,000 as directed by War Cabinet,[3] there were 25,452 still to come.

It was recognised that the lack of new recruits to the services was due to some extent to the manpower reservation policy, but, on the other hand, while the falling off of recruits left more men available to industry, it did not follow that they were the particular men which industry required to meet high priority demands. That end could be better served by the nomination of servicemen for release for return to the industries in which they had been previously engaged. The War Commitments Committee pointed to the fact that a large proportion of the recommendations for release made by the Manpower Directorate were refused by the services. In the case of the Army, out of 63,849 recommendations for release from October 1943 to December 1944, only about 60 per cent had been approved while in more recent months from September 1944 to December

[2] War Cabinet Agendum 8/1945, 10 Feb 1945, and War Cabinet Minute 4059, 27 Feb 1945.
[3] War Cabinet Minute 3740.

1944 only 40 per cent had been approved. The Committee obtained from War Cabinet a direction that all recommendations made by the Manpower Directorate "should be approved by the services to the average extent of 75 per cent should this prove to be necessary in order to ensure the release of personnel in accordance with War Cabinet's directions". In respect of limited numbers of men, required for certain special industries, labour for which could not be provided from other sources, recommendations made by the Manpower Directorate should be approved by the services to the extent of 90 per cent. The Manpower Directorate, which had confessed some difficulty in obtaining names of men to be returned to high priority industries, was encouraged by War Cabinet to make vigorous efforts to ensure the greatest possible flow of nominations for release and the services were directed to cooperate with the Manpower Directorate in the selection of men for release.[5]

During January 1945 the Defence Committee reviewed the progress made up to 31st December 1944 in carrying out the War Cabinet's direction that the strength of the A.M.F. was to be reduced by 30,000 and the R.A.A.F. by 15,000,[6] 20,000 being released by December 1944 and 25,000 by 30th June, in addition to discharges by normal wastage. They also considered the further direction of War Cabinet[7] to report on the release of an additional 40,000 men from the services at the earliest possible date.

Their review was considered by War Cabinet on 9th February in conjunction with a manpower review by the War Commitments Committee.[8]

The report of the War Commitments Committee, which was presented to War Cabinet by Dedman and considered alongside the report of the Defence Committee at the meeting on 9th February, stated as its first major conclusion that the commitments "at present undertaken in the military, indirect war and civilian aspects of the Australian war effort are beyond the capacity of our manpower to carry out". It considered that "no significant provision of manpower for high priority purposes can be expected from further austerity measures in low priority civilian activities" and continued:

> That for practical purposes a clear-cut choice confronts the Government: either the production and other programmes (including service recruitment at present approved rates) requiring in 1945 an estimated 174,000 men and 34,000 women must be curtailed to the point at which they will require only 85,000 men and 7,000 women, or else the gap of 89,000 men and 27,000 women must be bridged partly by further releases of service personnel and partly by curtailment of the production and other programmes making demands for labour.

The Government was urged to reach a decision regarding the balance to be struck between "the direct military effort and the indirect war effort". This balance could only be determined by the Government in a full

[5] War Cabinet Minute 4046, 9 Feb 1945; War Cabinet Agendum 54/1945, 3 Feb 1945.
[6] War Cabinet Minute 3740, 23 Aug 1944.
[7] Minute 3858, 19 Oct.
[8] War Cabinet Minutes 4044 and 4045 of 9 Feb; War Cabinet Agenda 55/1945 and 52/1945 of 3 Feb.

knowledge of its war and post-war objectives. An immediate decision was needed regarding the direct military effort or Australia would be committed in a way which would prejudice any subsequent re-balancing of the war effort for an indefinite time to come.

The manpower situation was placed before War Cabinet comprehensively and with a wealth of information regarding the various courses of action open to it.[9]

The War Cabinet shirked the responsibility thrown on it for an immediate and basic decision. Production Executive was asked to give further consideration, in consultation with the War Commitments Committee, to the allocation of male labour within the indirect war effort and to submit another report to the War Cabinet. The War Cabinet deferred a specific recommendation for "a substantially more rigorous and comprehensive control of female labour" and asked a ministerial committee to re-examine the possibility of tightening existing controls. It passed on to the Full Cabinet "in view of its importance and relation to the industrial position" a recommendation that "the Government reaffirm the principle that all Commonwealth authorities should make every effort to ensure the working of hours at the maximum consistent with considerations of health and efficiency, unless circumstances are such that the labour concerned could not be effectively used elsewhere; this principle to be applied, for instance, by the Production Departments, and by the Manpower Directorate in supplying and withdrawing labour to and from particular establishments".[1]

The Defence Committee recommended a monthly intake of 4,200 and 727 women as being necessary to maintain the Navy at present strength, man the ships being built under the Australian naval construction programme and to man two modern cruisers and one light fleet carrier which it was proposed should be obtained from the Royal Navy; to maintain the Army at six divisions and two armoured brigades for active operations in the South-West Pacific Area; and to develop and maintain the R.A.A.F. to the approved strength of 53 squadrons for operations in the South-West Pacific Area.[2] The Army estimated that even this intake would leave it with a deficiency of 3,162 men at 30th June 1945.

War Cabinet decided that the intake should remain at 3,000 men and, as the authorised intake of 1,020 women a month had not been realised, to reduce it to 700 a month. In respect of the reduction in the allocation of women to the services, the Defence Committee had suggested a reduction because their experience had shown that without compulsion it was not possible to enlist 1,020 women a month (the average monthly intake during the past six months had been only 473) and this deficiency had

[9] See Volumes III and IV in this series.

[1] War Cabinet Minute 4045, 9 Feb 1945, on War Cabinet Agendum 52/1945, of 3 Feb.

[2] Subsequently it was reported to War Cabinet that the reduced intake would probably result in the reduction of the RAAF development programme from 53 squadrons, including two in nucleus, to 51 squadrons, including two in nucleus. (War Cabinet Minute 4102, 20 Mar 1945, on War Cabinet Agendum 55/1945, Supplement No. 1.)

seriously interfered with the organisation of the services. Instead of taking the measures of compulsion at which the services had hinted, however, War Cabinet reduced the quota of women.

In discussing the allocation of this quota of 3,000 men a month, War Cabinet specifically directed that the Army organisation was not to be reduced below the six divisions and two brigades without the approval of War Cabinet and agreed that the Prime Minister should reopen with Mr Churchill the offer made by the United Kingdom in May 1944 to hand over an aircraft carrier and one or more cruisers if Australia could man them. In such discussions, War Cabinet said, Curtin should ask that any ships manned by Australia should be transferred without payment to the Royal Australian Navy and the ships should be modern.[3]

In the second part of its report the Defence Committee strongly recommended against the proposed release of a further 40,000 men from the services. It could not be carried out without reducing the Army expeditionary force of two divisions and cutting down the 53-squadron programme to about 48 squadrons.

The Army objection was explicit. After saying that it could not carry any further the policy of reconstruction and disbandment of units in order to maintain operational forces, the report continued:

> Of the forces for employment in active operations in the South-West Pacific Area, four divisions are already engaged in operations in New Guinea, New Britain and the Solomon Islands where they have relieved United States forces. No reduction in the strength of these forces is possible at present. The only other force available is the expeditionary force.
>
> The release of 26,000 men [the suggested Army quota of the 40,000] would create such a deficiency in the Army that the Commander-in-Chief is of the opinion . . . that, if it were decided upon, it would be necessary to inform the Commander-in-Chief, South-West Pacific Area, immediately, that the Australian Army cannot be maintained at the strength agreed upon and that it will be necessary to reduce the expeditionary force from one army corps of two divisions and ancillary troops to one division and attached troops, when such releases are to be made. This would bring the Australian expeditionary force to approximately the same dimensions as that of New Zealand. Any variation of the proportional allocation of releases between the services which would require a substantial contribution from the Army would have the same effect. The only alternative to such a reduction would be the successful conclusion of operations in New Guinea or New Britain or the Solomon Islands to permit a formation to be withdrawn in time to meet the releases that would have to be made. At present, it is not possible to form any conclusion upon the likelihood of this happening.

War Cabinet, recognising the point, decided that Curtin should ascertain from MacArthur if he were adhering to the operational plans on which the Australian contribution had been calculated. As the Australian war effort was "still in a state of disequilibrium", War Cabinet said, "the earliest opportunity should be taken to rectify it as soon as the operational situation will permit". If there had been no variation of MacArthur's plans,

[3] On 6th June, however, the War Cabinet approved a recommendation of the Advisory War Council that in view of the overwhelming American and British strength in the Pacific and the acuteness of the Australian manpower position generally, the proposal to man ships transferred from the Royal Navy "should not be proceeded with as a war project". War Cabinet Minute 4241, 6 Jun 1945.

Curtin should consult with him regarding the contemplated use of the Australian forces "with a view to determining the stage at which appropriate reductions can be made and deciding the future strengths which should be maintained". War Cabinet would again review the position in the light of these consultations.[4]

On 20th March Curtin informed War Cabinet that he had received the following answer from MacArthur:

> In categorical reply to your basic question, I would state that my plans contemplate the use of all the Australian forces now assigned to the South-West Pacific Area.

War Cabinet concurred in the view expressed by Curtin that, except for such measures as might be possible to ensure the economical use of manpower in the forces, it would not appear, in view of General MacArthur's reply, that any further steps should be taken for the reduction of the present approved strength until after the completion of the next phase of operations.[5]

Among other factors which War Cabinet noted was the fact that about 19,000 men of the R.A.A.F. were serving overseas. It was decided that the relation of the Australian manpower position to the early return of R.A.A.F. personnel after the defeat of Germany should be taken up with the United Kingdom Government. In the meantime no commitments were to be entered into for the allotment to the South-East Asia Area of R.A.A.F. squadrons serving overseas.

Production Executive and the War Commitments Committee continued to shuffle the available manpower within the limits set by War Cabinet decisions.[6]

Meanwhile Curtin took up direct with MacArthur the question of a review of United States requirements in order to find out what facilities or supplies the American forces might no longer require as they moved farther north and what they might be able to relinquish to the British naval forces. MacArthur agreed that there should be a proportionate allocation of Australian production for logistic support of each of the Allied forces based in Australia and that the advent of the British Fleet called for new arrangements. Accordingly an American was appointed to confer with the Defence Committee.[7]

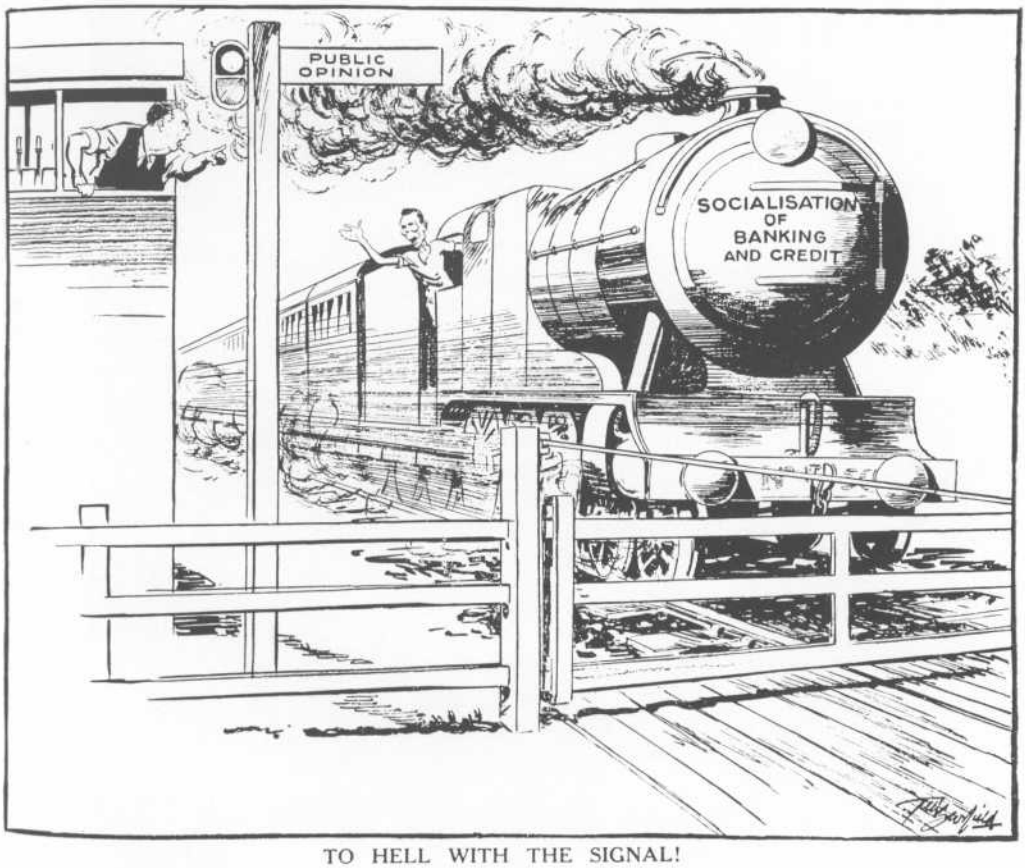
The discussions took place and in due course War Cabinet was informed of the release of certain facilities by the United States forces, reductions in American demands on Australian production and manpower, and the probable future developments. Food still remained a major and undiminished American demand, but munitions demands were reduced to a third of their former size and the programme of construction work practically ceased in March. The direct employment of Australian civilians

[4] War Cabinet Minute 4044, 9 Feb.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 4116, 20 Mar 1945; War Cabinet Agendum 115/1945, 19 Mar.
[6] See War Cabinet Agendum 61/1945 and War Cabinet Minute 4063, 27 Feb 1945.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 4076, 6 Mar 1945, on War Cabinet Agendum 86/1945, 2 Mar 1945.



Australian War Memorial

A meeting of wives and fiancées of American servicemen. As was to be expected, many of the friendships which developed in wartime between lonely American servicemen and young Australian women ripened into more lasting associations. In August 1945 it was estimated that over 10,000 Australian wives or fiancées of American servicemen would eventually go to the United States.



TO HELL WITH THE SIGNAL!

Scorfield in Bulletin (*Sydney*), *21 Mar 1945*

Even before the war ended there were signs of a Labour Government's plans for socialisation and disregard of contrary views. Chifley, in March 1945—a locomotive driver before entering politics—disregards the warning gestures of signalman Menzies.

by the United States forces had fallen by the end of February from 23,000 to 13,000 and it was estimated by the Australian authorities that the reduction in the volume of supplies for the United States forces resulted in a falling-off from 49,000 to 19,000 of the number of persons engaged in the production of these supplies. American requirements of storage space and accommodation were still high but were expected to decline progressively through 1945.[8]

A report on Reciprocal Lend-Lease Administration to the end of February 1945 also showed a lessening of demands for supplies and services from Australia as the American forces moved north and as more supplies were shipped or flown direct from North America. Food demands were still heavy and were likely to stay heavy.[9]

On 31st May 1945 the War Cabinet, on the recommendation of the Advisory War Council, made a number of decisions about the manpower position of the services.[1] These were explained to Parliament by the Acting Prime Minister, next day. The main decisions, he said, related to the reduction of the services by at least 50,000 special releases from the army and air force by the end of the year to provide for the discharge of men urgently needed in the civil economy and to enable members of the forces with long service or former prisoners of war "for extended periods" to be given the option of discharge. These discharges would be in addition to 20,000 "normal wastage". The defeat of Germany enabled the United Nations to concentrate their strength in the Pacific. There would be considerable demobilisation of forces in the United Kingdom, United States and Canada and probably New Zealand. Australia's war record entitled her to adjust her manpower position so that while providing an equitable military effort against Japan she would place the civil economy on a more satisfactory footing.

All members of the army and air force with operational service overseas who had over five years war service would be given the option of discharge. All prisoners of war captured in the Middle East or by the Japanese would be allowed to take their discharge on their return to Australia, and prisoners taken in other theatres who had been prisoners for a similar period would be given the same choice. Recruitment of aircrew and current aircrew basic training would be suspended, and aircrew not wanted for R.A.A.F. operational commitments released for civil life.

The supply programmes were being reviewed. Arrangements would be made to clear surplus stores held by the services while a demand existed in the civil economy "rather than that they should be released later and cause a glut when civilian production has overtaken arrears". All new works for the services costing £5,000 or more would in future be subject to the approval of the War Cabinet.

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[8] War Cabinet Agendum 136/1945 and Supplement; War Cabinet Minute 4148, 16 Apr 1945.
[9] War Cabinet Agendum 138/1945, 7 Apr 1945.
[1] War Cabinet Minute 4220, 31 May 1945.

When deciding on 31st May[2] to release at least 50,000 men from the Army and Air Force by the end of 1945, War Cabinet asked the War Commitments Committee to formulate the conditions of release so as to provide for "the most pressing needs of the civil economy" and to comply with War Cabinet's directions in regard to the release of long-service men, prisoners of war and surplus air crew. The Committee was also to assess the priority and allocation of manpower for the civil economy and ensure that all released persons were placed and re-settled.

Reporting to War Cabinet on 21st June 1945, Dedman said that the Committee had found that the "high priority industrial requirements" for July-December totalled 80,000 men and that of this total 50,000 was "a vital and minimum requirement, failure to meet which during July-December 1945 would defeat the primary objective of the Government's review of the direct war effort". Of these, 40,000 would have to be met from special service releases. Accordingly the Committee recommended the release of 40,000 more men from the army from July to December 1945.

As on previous occasions the army objected that it would not yield up so large a number of men unless "some substantial relief from operational commitments" was given but War Cabinet, whose action was endorsed by the Advisory War Council, maintained its decision and approved a programme of monthly special releases from the services to total 54,000 by the end of the year, plus 10,000 other releases of men on occupational grounds irrespective of service. The monthly intake of men and women into the services by new recruitment was reduced from 3,500 to 2,550. It was expressly stated that the carrying out of this programme was not to involve any curtailment of the operational commitments already approved or the approximate time-tables for their accomplishment, without the authority of War Cabinet.

In maintaining this decision it became even clearer than it had been before that the manpower policy of the Government was ranging beyond the conduct of the war to preparations for the post-war period. Political considerations related to the Government's own reputation were also urged. Dedman, presenting most strongly for the approval of War Cabinet the recommendations of Production Executive that service reservations be overruled, stated the arguments of Production Executive as follows:

> While recognising that the matters involved in these service reservations fall primarily within the jurisdiction of War Cabinet, Production Executive believes that very important issues are at stake from the viewpoint of the civil economy, and the progress of the Government's plans for an orderly re-diversion of resources from war to peacetime uses. It is desired to place the following comments before War Cabinet:
>
> (*a*) If the services are to be left in a position to judge whether giving effect to the plan is practicable in view of their operational commitments, any operational delay may mean that the plan for at least 50,000 releases before the end of the year would become meaningless with serious loss of prestige to the Government and very great harm to the restoration of the civil economy.
>
> (*b*) The capacity of the economy to absorb large numbers later in the year depends

[2] War Cabinet Minute 4220.

upon the immediate release of key men and those necessary to re-establish key industries;

(*c*) the position of the housing, transport and other industries brooks no delay in making necessary men available;

(*d*) the decision in the early part of this year not to release additional men, as recommended by Production Executive, was a serious set-back to the civil economy and to our plans for full employment in the transition period. Any failure to give full effect to the occupational releases planned in the War Commitments Committee's report can mean only the collapse of our employment plans and our capacity to absorb servicemen and war workers. Production Executive does not believe that any Government could survive such a failure.

The clear and firm priority which Production Executive gave to the "civil economy" over the employment of the fighting services is indicated by their recommendation that the War Cabinet should verify at the highest level whether operational commitments in fact precluded the carrying out of the plans for special releases, and if War Cabinet was satisfied that the reservations made by the services were justified then War Cabinet should make it clear that the release plan was to be carried out and should direct the services to advise forthwith what modifications of the commitments ought to be made. At this stage it becomes plain that the Curtin Government, besides diverting manpower from one form of direct war effort to another form, was also diverting it from the war effort to its planning for the post-war situation.

The War Cabinet apparently believed that service reservations were not justified, and, in general, accepted the view of Production Executive. In confirming the release of 54,000 men it directed that 34,000 should come from the Army and 20,000 from the Air Force.[3]

The end of the war in Europe increased the probability that surplus stocks would be held overseas and that the demand in Australia for certain items would disappear. In June a new review was commenced of current works, stocks and orders on Australian production.[4]

Meanwhile the extent, and the fluctuation, of the works programme for the British Pacific Fleet had continued to exercise the War Cabinet. On 27th March[5] it had asked the Department of Works in consultation with other departments concerned to report on the programme. The report which came before the War Cabinet on 12th June showed that the grand total cost of works required was £7,943,867; less works suspended (£1,979,500) £5,964,367 was left. The total authorisations amounted to £4,331,603, omitting suspended works. The total expenditure to 18th May was £2,350,583. The War Cabinet noted that a number of projects in the programme had not yet been submitted to it; a list of these was to be furnished to the Minister for Works. The procedure providing for the

[3] War Cabinet Agenda 277/1945, 273/1945, 280/1945; War Cabinet Minute 4291, 28 Jun 1945; Advisory War Council Agendum 28/1945.

[4] War Cabinet Agendum 279/1945.

[5] War Cabinet Minute 4131.

submission of supplementary statements of additional Royal Navy proposals for consideration by Production Executive and the War Cabinet was to be strictly observed by the departments concerned, to ensure that the assessment and authorisation of commitments was complete. The question of additional funds required for certain projects was to be followed up by the Treasury.

When War Cabinet next had before it a review of the Royal Navy Works programme[6] the cost of items approved totalled £8,737,511 net. The Joint Administrative Planning Committee pointed out that it had been hoped that substantial facilities for the Fleet Air Arm could be provided at an intermediate base to be established outside Australia and therefore work to cost £1,460,000 had been deferred. It was now found impossible to construct a base in the forward areas or to obtain one from the Americans, and it was necessary to return to the original plan to build up one in Australia. Numerous comparatively small works not included in the original plan had meanwhile been approved, and there were certain requests for works for the R.A.F. Transport Command working with the British Pacific Fleet. The sub-committee considered that a fresh review of all works required for the Royal Navy and the R.A.F. was needed.

Production Executive observed[7] that the Full Cabinet had recently approved a housing programme regarded as an essential minimum in view of the critical housing shortage and to achieve it during July-December would involve manpower requirements approaching 20,000 men. It was essential to concentrate on obtaining resources for the housing programme from the chief source known to contain labour of the types required—the Allied Works Council. If the additional Royal Navy commitment (for the Fleet Air Arm) was accepted the Allied Works Council, far from releasing labour, would require 600 more men immediately to bring its strength up to the maximum approved by War Cabinet[8] and would need to have wastage replaced, at least until the end of September. On the other hand if War Cabinet decided that the additional Royal Navy commitment could not be accepted and if the Australian services were held to the diversion of manpower from their own projects that they had offered as a contribution to Royal Navy projects, the Allied Works Council should be able in the July-December period to release most of the labour engaged on Royal Navy projects. In the Production Executive's opinion acceptance of the additional commitments for Royal Navy works was beyond Australia's capacity having regard to the urgency of the housing programme.

On the recommendation of the Advisory War Council the War Cabinet decided that no additional works could be undertaken for the Royal Navy unless they could be met by using Allied Works Council manpower that could not be diverted to housing, or unless the Royal Navy programme could be revised so that it could be carried out by the present labour

[6] War Cabinet Minute 4292; War Cabinet Agenda 261 and 265, 12 Jun 1945.
[7] War Cabinet Agendum 265/1945.
[8] Minute 3980.

force on Royal Navy works, after providing for the reduction in strength which had been in suspense and the further reduction to be effected by the end of 1945. The Defence Committee was to make a further review of the Royal Navy programme.

On 3rd July a telegram[9] was sent to the United Kingdom Government repeating that there were "considerable limitations" on Australia's capacity to undertake additional commitments. Notwithstanding the nature and extent of the Australian war effort and the retardation of the housing programme, commitments already accepted for the Royal Navy totalled over £25,000,000. (This figure evidently included the cost of food and other services as well as works.)

On 11th July the War Cabinet discussed the new programme of Royal Navy works totalling £3,309,500, which was additional to the programme for £5,562,500 originally approved. The War Cabinet noted that the Royal Navy representatives, after a conference on 10th July with the Director-General of Works, had said that it had been possible to delete a few items owing to American releases, and the Admiralty had been asked to cancel the floating docks that had been asked for (£350,000), but apart from that the programme could not be further reduced.

The War Cabinet reaffirmed its decision that its commitment was not to exceed work costing £6,562,000 and recalled that the limitations of Australia's capacity had been constantly emphasised to the United Kingdom Government. It noted also that the necessity for advantage being taken by the Royal Navy of existing accommodation had frequently been stressed. Finally it observed that Australia's fighting forces were being reduced by 64,000 men by the end of the year to provide for housing and other high priority needs of the civil economy, and recalled the recommendation by the Advisory War Council that "in the assessment of capacity to undertake additional commitments, it was to guard against the neutralisation of the measures being taken to establish equilibrium in the war effort".[1]

The end of the Japanese war, however, was now approaching and before long the prospective role of the British Pacific Fleet would disappear. At the time when War Cabinet was discussing these matters, however, the expectation was that the offensive in the Pacific might be a prolonged struggle, for the Australian Government had no knowledge that a new and devastating weapon would be used so dramatically at Hiroshima. It started to unwind the direct war effort at a time when the prospect ahead was for a major offensive by conventional weapons, moving the battlefields further and further away from the Australian continent.

2—THE ROLE OF THE ARMY, JUNE 1944 TO JULY 1945

The weight of decisions taken by the Government had favoured the civil side of the war effort. While it would be unfair to say that War

[9] No. 174.
[1] War Cabinet Minute 4328, 11 Jul 1945.

Cabinet had made a deliberate decision that Australia should do less fighting, that was the effect of the decisions they took on manpower policy. The capacity of the Australian Army to play a more significant role was reduced. This happened at a time when other influences were tending to give a secondary role to the Australian troops.

By mid-1944 the Sixth American Army, supported by Australian air squadrons as well as its own, had advanced as far as the Vogelkop Peninsula in Dutch New Guinea. It had now advanced 1,500 miles since it made its first forward move from Milne Bay to Kiriwina and Woodlark Islands 13 months earlier. Behind the spearhead forces in Dutch New Guinea other American troops were still engaged in three areas in Australian territory—Bougainville, New Britain and Aitape—and were garrisoning other places in that territory.

On 22nd November 1943 Curtin had written to MacArthur to point out that Australia had a special interest in the employment of her own forces in driving the Japanese from her own territories.[2] In March 1944 Blamey had told General Morshead, then commanding in New Guinea, that he expected an American request that Australians should take over all areas in Australian New Guinea, and on 12th July MacArthur did inform Blamey that he wished Australian troops to assume responsibility for the continued neutralisation of the Japanese in Australian and British territory and mandates, exclusive of the Admiralty Islands, by the following dates: northern Solomons-Green Islands-Emirau Island by 1st October; Australian New Guinea and New Britain by 1st November.[3] In the advance to the Philippines, he said, he contemplated using one Australian division by November 1944 and a second by January 1945.

MacArthur would not agree to Blamey's proposal that he should hold the three areas with a total of seven brigades, which was little more than one-third of the American forces then deployed in them. After a series of conferences he directed that four brigades be used on Bougainville, one distributed among Emirau, Green, the Treasury Islands and New Georgia, three on New Britain, and four on the mainland of New Guinea. Thus only an Australian corps of two divisions would remain for operations farther north, with no division in reserve.

Blamey attended a meeting of the Advisory War Council on 7th September 1944 and informed members of MacArthur's decision that Australian forces should take over the responsibility of looking after Australian territory, including the Mandated Territory. General MacArthur, he said, was also determined that there should be an Australian component in the forces allotted for the Philippines. This had necessitated redistribution of the Australian forces. The XIV United States Corps in Bougainville would be replaced by the II Australian Corps, which was now operating as New Guinea Force Headquarters. They would move to Torokina and would also garrison Munda, the Treasury Islands and Emirau. Rabaul would be left alone for the time being. This would absorb the 3rd

[2] See above, Chapter 7, pp. 415-16.

[3] New Britain and the other islands here mentioned were in fact part of Australian New Guinea.

Division under Major-General W. Bridgeford and two brigades of the 11th Division. The Australians had also been directed to take control of New Britain, and the 5th Australian Division under Major-General A. H. Ramsay would be used for this purpose. The Aitape area would be the responsibility of the 6th Australian Division under Major-General J. E. S. Stevens. Headquarters, First Australian Army, would move from Atherton and take over the New Guinea area. In addition to the above activities, which would absorb four divisions, the Commander-in-Chief S.W.P.A. desired to establish an expeditionary force for further operations. This would consist of the 7th and 9th Divisions, making up the I Corps, which was now being prepared under Morshead. The foregoing dispositions would require practically all the fighting troops now in Australia. The garrison in Western Australia was being reduced to a minimum and that in the Northern Territory was being substantially reduced. Air strength in the Northern Territory virtually precluded an enemy landing, but it was still necessary to maintain some troops there.

The next forward move would take place about 15th September, when United States forces would seize the island at the northern end of Halmahera, while at the same time Admiral Nimitz would seize the southernmost island of the Palau group. This would be followed by a further step forward and a month later the first move against the Philippines would take place. No Australian troops had been allotted for these initial operations and the further moves had not yet been decided.[4]

At a Council meeting a fortnight later there was a general discussion on the part to be played by Australian land forces in connection with garrisoning and mopping up operations in New Guinea and adjacent islands. The question was raised whether, after allowing for the Australian contribution of two divisions for the advance on the Philippines, the forces remaining were adequate for these operations. The information before the Council was to the effect that there were 30,000 Japanese in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, and 40,000 in New Britain and New Ireland. Blamey reassured members by saying that large-scale active operations were not contemplated at present. Enemy strength and positions would be probed and the extent of further operations would then be determined.[5]

At this time Blamey was fighting a rearguard action against the possible further reduction of the Army. On 15th September and again on 26th September, Blamey, in letters to Curtin warned the Prime Minister of his "grave misgivings" as to the maintenance of Australian offensive forces in the event of protracted operations in 1945. He estimated that on 1st July 1945 there would be a total deficiency of 37,000 in the Army manpower required to maintain the force of six divisions and two brigades. In part, his letter made a comparison with the more favourable position of the R.A.A.F. and asked that the allotment of men to the R.A.A.F. should definitely be related to the number of combat aircraft likely to become

[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1405, 7 Sep 1944.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 1419, 21 Sep 1944.

available by the end of 1945. He stressed, however, his view that manpower decisions meant that considerable disbandment of Australian units would become inevitable at a critical stage of the Pacific war and would reduce the Australian forces very much below that agreed upon at Washington.

The War Cabinet adhered to its decision that no revision of the monthly allocation of men to the services should be made before December 1944, and that a further review of manpower should be made with the object of releasing at least another 40,000 men from the services to make adequate provision for the essential needs of the civilian population and for other non-military purposes on standards appropriate to the present stage of the war.

My previous criticisms still hold (wrote Blamey to Curtin on 27th October). The Army's decrease in offensive power in the forward operational area will immediately and directly reduce the maximum effort that this country can bring to bear against the enemy by the destruction of his armed forces required for the direct prosecution of the war. I agree the civil population is short of housing and that there is also a shortage of a number of commodities, some of which are important and some of probably lesser consequence. The same conditions obtain in Britain and elsewhere to a much greater degree. These countries have accepted the conditions of essential privation and stepped up production in order to preserve their striking power, for they appreciate that by this method, and this method alone, can the enemy finally be brought to his knees. . . . It is suggested that the proposed solution [to release a further 40,000 men after the December 1944 review] is not contributing to the nation's maximum effort against the enemy's prime means of waging war. . . . If the further reduction of 40,000 is decided upon, I have no alternative but to advise the Government to inform General MacArthur that the Australian Army cannot be maintained at the strength allotted and that it will be necessary to reduce the expeditionary force from one army corps of two divisions and essential service elements to one division. This will bring the Australian expeditionary force to approximately the same dimensions as New Zealand.[6]

The Navy, too, made representations for an increased intake of men and the R.A.A.F. maintained its case for 53 squadrons.

The War Cabinet, however, would not depart from its decision to make a further review at the end of December 1944.[7]

On 14th September Curtin had discussed with Air Vice-Marshal W. D. Bostock (Air Officer Commanding the R.A.A.F. in the S.W.P.A.) the future employment of the Australian Air Force in the South-West Pacific. Curtin stated the principles that the first requirement was adequate air support for Australian land forces by the Allied Air Forces; that R.A.A.F. air support should be available to Australian land forces to the greatest extent practicable wherever they were in contact with the enemy; that it was desirable that an R.A.A.F. Tactical Air Force should be maintained as an integrated formation of such strength as might be practicable for the purpose of cooperating with the Australian land forces in the coming offensive operations; and, should circumstances prevent the retention of a Tactical Air Force, every effort should be made to ensure that the R.A.A.F.

[6] See p. 559 above for the use made of this in the Defence Committee's report to Cabinet.
[7] War Cabinet Minute 3860, 15 Nov 1944, on Agendum 505/1944.

was represented with the Allied Air Forces by individual wings or even separate squadrons in the advance against Japan.

Bostock had said that the strength of the Tactical Air Force might fluctuate but he considered that an effort should be made to maintain it at a strength not less than two fighter wings, each of three squadrons, and one attack wing of three squadrons.

Curtin stated the further principle that mopping-up and air garrison duties in re-occupied territories would be undertaken by the R.A.A.F. only after provision had been made to meet the other commitments.

When reporting this discussion to the Advisory War Council Curtin said that he had given this advice to Bostock to guide him when he was making recommendations to the Commander of the Allied Air Forces. The council endorsed Curtin's statement.[8]

Curtin mentioned to the Advisory War Council on 28th September that a representative of MacArthur had told him that in view of the outstanding successes in the advance to the Philippines it had been decided to accelerate the plans and eliminate certain operations originally contemplated as intermediate steps. General Northcott (the Chief of the General Staff) told the Council that, as this decision involved the concentration of shipping and small craft earlier than intended, the take-over by Australians in New Guinea had been postponed, but not on Bougainville.[9]

The Australian forces duly took over from the Americans on Bougainville and New Britain and at Aitape on the mainland of New Guinea from October onwards.[1]

These were the circumstances in which public controversy began. The publication of news about the proposed release of men from the Army led from September 1944 onwards to criticism of Australia for failure to continue doing her proper share. As an example, one newspaper published a report from India saying that the question was frequently asked by British and American servicemen whether the Australian Army was pulling right out of the war.[2] In the Senate a question was asked on 13th September whether the Australian Army was to take any further active part in the war.[3] Forde and Blamey answered such statements by declaring that hard tasks lay ahead for the Army, that the war effort should be expanded not retarded, that Australians would take part in the push towards Japan, and that 1945 would be one of the hardest years of the war. Blamey particularly was in a difficult position, on the one hand fighting against the reductions and on the other reassuring the public and

[8] Advisory War Council Minute 1423, 21 Sep 1944.

[9] Advisory War Council Minute 1430, 28 Sep 1944.

[1] The disposition of troops in the South-West Pacific Area at the beginning of November 1944 showed a total strength in the Australian Military Forces (excluding women's services) of 396,010 (178,423 in operational units and 217,587 in base, lines of communication and training units). Of the total Australian strength in operational units, 37,153 were in New Guinea and the rest were still on the Australian mainland. The United States had 257,228 combat troops in New Guinea, New Britain and adjacent islands and 107,004 in the Philippines as well as numbers of men in other operational areas.

[2] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 Sep 1944.

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 179, p. 657.

maintaining the morale of his own forces. In a statement on 31st October he declared that the fighting in which the Australians were engaged in New Guinea and adjacent islands against an estimated total of 90,000 Japanese troops who had been bypassed by the Allied advance was an important and necessary part of the operations. The reason why he made this statement was, in his own words, that the rapid advance of MacArthur in the Philippines had encouraged in Australia the complacent anticipation of the end of the war that had been all too apparent since Australian troops stopped the Japanese advance in New Guinea in September 1942. The people of Australia, he said, were not giving the backing required by the Army to win the war.

In parliamentary debates in November, Menzies spoke on the same theme. "We in Australia," he said, "have entered upon a relaxed and, for too many people, almost a carefree mood."

The situation was not helped by the fact that no news of the Australian operations in New Guinea and the Solomons was appearing in MacArthur's communiqués and consequently the correspondents' reports of Australian operations could not be released by the censor. On 4th January General Sturdee, commanding the First Australian Army, wrote to Blamey to say that he had been awaiting some press announcement that the Australian Army still existed in New Guinea. "The Australian public must be wondering whether we are still in the war," he wrote. It happened that on the following day Spender, who was visiting New York, complained to a newspaper that MacArthur's communiqués were placing Australia and her war effort in a false light.[4] Both Blamey and Forde wrote to MacArthur about the desirability of mentioning the Australians, and, as a result the communiqué of 9th January included the following paragraphs:

NEW GUINEA: Medium units struck enemy concentrations and coastal traffic in the Wewak area, dropping twenty-one tons of bombs.

BISMARCK-SOLOMONS AND EASTERN NEW GUINEA: Medium and light bombers with thirty tons attacked enemy defenses, communications, and bivouacs at Rabaul, Northern New Ireland, and Bougainville. Trucks were damaged and shelters destroyed. Australian Forces have relieved United States Army elements along the Solomons axis, in New Britain and British New Guinea. Continuous actions of attrition at all points of contact have been in progress. 372 Japanese have been killed, twenty captured, and ten friendly nationals have been recovered.

In Australia this led to the publication of much news about the operations in the New Guinea areas that had been held up by the censor, but one Australian newspaper kept the old pot stirred with a report from New York:

American public opinion, which is inclined to write off Australia as a fighting force for the remainder of the Pacific war, now sees the Digger in the humblest of secondary roles—mopping-up behind the real fighting, slogging Yank.

This feeling is reflected by American newspapers, which display the story of Australia's garrisoning job in the Pacific under such headings as "Australians take over behind the Pacific front".

[4] New York *Herald Tribune*, 5 Jan 1945.

They wonder who is responsible for the strategy—General MacArthur or the Australian Government.

It is considered here time for some plain speaking from Australia on just what was the reason for the inactive role of the A.I.F. last year. As far as the rest of the world knows, the Australians cleaned up the Ramu Valley campaign and then faded into the blue.

The latest information of the Australians' job in the Pacific was apparently dug out from South-West Pacific HQ following the New York criticism of General MacArthur's communiqués by Mr Spender, M.H.R.

If the latest information means that the Australian campaign is to eradicate "backyard Japs", the question of necessity arises. From this distance, the Solomons, New Britain and New Guinea garrisons seem well under control, and there is no military need to waste Australian lives routing out the beleaguered enemy.[5]

Later reports quoted New York papers as praising Australia's war effort, though at times in somewhat ambiguous terms. For example, a leading article in the *New York Times* was quoted as saying: "It is heartening to read the news, too long delayed, of the magnificent part being played by Australian fighters in an area we had come to look upon as entirely American."[6]

So far neither of the two Australian divisions held in reserve for the operations farther north had been called forward, though several plans had been made for their employment and later cancelled.

Parliament re-assembled on 21st February and on the 22nd Mr Menzies raised "a matter which was gravely concerning his own mind and, he was quite sure, the minds of hundreds of thousands of other people". He said:

From the Governor-General's speech and from all the facts as we see them, it is clear that the main amphibious drive towards Japan is to be undertaken by the American forces through the Philippines and along a route about which we can speculate. The role allotted to the Australian forces ever since that drive began is the secondary role of "mopping-up" bypassed areas, which, as I understand it, cannot be regarded any longer as of primary military moment.

The question of where, in broad terms, Australian forces should be sent was, in the best sense of the term, a political question, Menzies continued. It was right that the Philippines were being retaken primarily by American military strength because America was "deeply pledged in its honour, self-respect, and pride" to relieve the Philippines. In the same way people of the British race had a profound interest in the relief of Burma, Malaya and Singapore, and Australians had a particular interest in the relief of the Netherlands East Indies. He would like to think—and he was not alone in Australia in this matter—that Australia would be able at this time to have a division, or perhaps two divisions, of the Australian Imperial Force fighting with other British troops for the relief of Malaya, and the rescue of those men who were captured at Singapore.[7]

Curtin replied that the Government had decided that all Australian ground troops should be assigned to the command of General MacArthur in the South-West Pacific Area. He accepted Menzies's view that Australia

[5] *Herald* (Melbourne), 10 Jan 1945.
[6] *Argus* (Melbourne), 15 Jan 1945.
[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 57-8.

had a major political and national interest in the British Empire, Malaya, Singapore and the Far East, but Australia had a major political issue nearer home: to clear out the enemy still in occupation of territories for which the Australian Government was politically responsible.

In reply to an inquiry by Spender why Australian troops were not fighting in the Philippines, Curtin said that MacArthur had been able to succeed in his plans with less strength than he originally believed would be necessary.[8]

At this stage Curtin brought the criticism of the employment of Australian troops to MacArthur's notice. In February, in a letter to MacArthur, he said that he had been told by Blamey that a request by MacArthur to Washington for ships to move I Australian Corps forward had not been accepted. Elements of the Corps had now been on the mainland for up to 18 months. There was public criticism of the inactivity of the Australian land forces, and this criticism, in a large degree, had arisen from the men themselves. It seemed that when the all-out effort against Japan was mounted the forces allotted by the Allies would be much less than those now being used. If so Australia's allocation should be considerably reduced. It would appear that, on the present basis, after the defeat of Germany, Australia would be under greater relative strain than the other United Nations. He would be grateful for MacArthur's observation on the various points raised.

This letter seems to have produced a swift response. Blamey learnt that ships would be available at Townsville from early in March to begin moving the I Corps northward to Morotai, the base for the Australian forces that were to operate in Borneo. On 19th February Blamey wrote to Shedden: "It would seem that, although Washington refused to allow the retention of ships by General MacArthur, the suggestion contained in the Prime Minister's letter has promptly produced them out of the hat."

In the Senate on 28th February Senator Foll said that the Australian troops in New Guinea were not being used to the best advantage. The American troops had made no attempt to annihilate the Japanese in New Guinea, General MacArthur having expressed the view that they could be bypassed and cleaned up at a future date. But General Blamey had expressed the entirely different view that the Japanese should be mopped-up. In Foll's opinion many valuable Australian lives would be lost exterminating besieged Japanese forces which could never be relieved.

Foll then resumed an attack on Blamey personally that he had initiated in the Senate twelve months earlier when he had charged Blamey with having "shelved" a number of his generals. There was, he said, "a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction and a lack of faith" in Blamey. In fact,

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[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 73-4 (22 Feb 1945).
On 14th December 1944 MacArthur learnt from Marshall in Washington that Mountbatten had raised the question of an Australian division being made available to him. MacArthur replied that none of his divisions could be removed unless additional troops were sent from the United States, and advised that the matter be "dropped as quickly as possible" since, if it reached the Australian public it would arouse a degree of heated controversy that could only have an adverse effect. (RAAF War History Section, GHQ paper No. 56.) MacArthur evidently did not mention the suggestion to the Australian Government.

such was the surge of feeling against him that the best service he could render to Australia would be to resign. Foll then complained that Generals Rowell, Lavarack, Bennett, and Robertson had been put on the shelf.[9]

Senator Mattner complained that the Army in New Guinea was not adequately equipped. The Commander-in-Chief should be "a young and experienced man who has seen service in this war and is game enough to go to the front and see for himself what is taking place".[1]

In the House of Representatives on 2nd March Forde said that nothing had been done by the Australian Government to withhold Australians from participation in the Philippines campaign. The statement by Senator Mattner that there were grave shortages of and serious defects in the equipment of the Army in New Guinea was extravagant. He praised Blamey and deplored the "bitter criticism" that had been hurled at him.[2]

On 5th March Curtin announced that the Acting Minister for the Army, Senator Fraser—Forde was about to go abroad—would visit New Guinea and make a report.

The debate on the Address-in-Reply was still in progress on 14th March when Mr Archie Cameron resumed the criticism of the role of the Australian Army in New Guinea. He said that he did not believe that the Parliament, the people or the Army had complete confidence in the man entrusted with the command of the Army.[3]

In the House of Representatives on 22nd March Dedman replying on behalf of the Acting Minister for the Army to a question about the equipment of the Army made the point that if the men were using hand tools it was not because they did not have mechanical equipment but because of the impossibility of putting it into effective use in the terrain where they were fighting. If the American forces had been required to strike out from their limited perimeters and reconquer large areas of territory as the Australians had been doing for the last five months they would have found their massive equipment of little value to their forward infantry.[4]

The debate on a motion for the printing of Dedman's statement was resumed on 24th April after the Easter recess. Curtin described how, after he had asked Fraser to visit the operational areas and had given him "an open letter to members of the forces" inviting them to tell him anything they thought he should know, Fraser had furnished two reports, one about equipment, which would be tabled, and one about the welfare of the troops, which was being considered by the War Cabinet.

The essence of the criticism, Curtin said, was that the Australian forces were not adequately equipped and that the present operations should not have been undertaken in the circumstances; some critics went farther and said that the present operations should not be carried out at all but that

[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 127-30.
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 130-3.
[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 292-5.
[3] The debate on the Army which followed Curtin's statement on equipment of Australian troops on 24th April covers most of pp. 1025 to 1150.
[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 772-4.

Australian forces should be employed in more offensive action elsewhere. In June 1944, when he had discussed with MacArthur the contemplated plan of operations, he had said that he was anxious that the Australian forces should be represented in the Philippines. MacArthur expressed his appreciation and said that he would keep Curtin informed of his plans. In July MacArthur had instructed Blamey that Australian forces should relieve American forces in Australian and British territory in the South-West Pacific Area and had asked that two Australian divisions should be made available for the advance to the Philippines. Blamey had informed him that the operations had been discussed fully with MacArthur, who had given no specific instructions: MacArthur had stated that in such situations a local commander had considerable freedom of action as to methods, and that the local missions had been carried out with skill and energy and the equipment of the troops was sufficient.

The Government, Curtin added, accepted full responsibility for the operations. Casualties were remarkably low. From 3rd November 1944 to 4th April 1945, 317 had been killed and 1,394 wounded, against 5,549 Japanese confirmed killed and probably 6,558 unconfirmed killed. In the Philippines the Americans were clearing the Japanese from the whole of the islands to free the native peoples. Australia was following precisely the same principle, except that by the readjustment of the manpower position, the Government hoped to produce a more balanced effort appropriate to this stage of the war. All the major difficulties being encountered in the provision of supplies and amenities, Curtin said, could be attributed to a shortage of shipping, which was a world-wide problem, and to a lesser extent, the absence of the relatively smaller craft. Curtin then said that requests had been made to MacArthur and the British and United States authorities for more ships, and the forward movement of amphibious equipment was being accelerated. The critics who asserted that the troops' equipment was poor in type, quality and quantity were "unfair to those responsible for the equipment and maintenance of the forces, to the gallant troops using the equipment, and to the peace of mind of their relatives at home".[5]

The criticisms of equipment were answered in part by Senator Fraser's report. He said that on New Britain he found no shortage of equipment, and, in any event, the offensive there had been completed. The troops on Bougainville were well satisfied with their weapons, but felt that the tough fighting conditions were not properly appreciated on the mainland, and deplored that they were being used as the butt for attack in Parliament. Fraser described how, when the Australians took over from the Americans at Aitape, the landing of supplies for the Australians was delayed while the Americans loaded their equipment. "Practically the whole of the complaints from the Aitape area could be attributed to this cause." He had received practically no complaints about fighting equipment. Except on New Britain heavy mechanical equipment seemed to be capable of expan-

[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 1025-33.

sion. He had discussed this opinion with General Blamey who said that the jeep and trailer and the six-wheel-drive vehicles could operate in the forward area without the necessity for more than a cleared track. To bring heavy mechanical equipment forward would hinder the provision of more immediate requirements such as ammunition, supplies, etc. The amount of shipping had been inadequate since the beginning of the war. He considered that the quantity of small craft available was insufficient except on New Britain. The shortage was due to lack of shipping to carry these craft. All the major difficulties encountered by the higher command in the conduct of operations and the provision of supplies and any matters affecting reasonable amenities to the troops could be attributed to the shortage of shipping; the Government had constantly been pressing on the highest plane to meet this shipping deficiency.

Fraser's second report, which was not tabled in the House, but went before the War Cabinet, was described as dealing with matters other than equipment, but in fact dealt mainly with that subject. Many troops of the 6th Division, he wrote, considered that they were first-rate troops who were being used on a second-rate job. Members of this division thought that men with more than four years of service with an operational unit should be given an opportunity to take their discharge. Both Generals Blamey and Sturdee considered that there was a shortage of transport aircraft. The shipping situation at Aitape from December to March had led to shortages of some amenities. At the American base at Finschhafen there were 1,500,000 tons of equipment, but Australian applications for heavy mechanical equipment under lend-lease had invariably been deleted from Australian requisitions. "It is my view that practically the whole of the allegations that have been made in regard to Australian equipment in these areas has been brought about by the fact that American troops have always had a plenitude of every type of heavy mechanical equipment and small craft. This caused our troops to compare the inactivity of the U.S.A. fighting troops when in the areas, although in possession of all imaginable types of equipment and supplies to support them, with the activities of our own lads in grappling with the enemy with quite good facilities, but in lesser number and spread over a very much greater area."

The troops thought that the Government was not willing to accept the financial obligations involved under lend-lease if American equipment was made available. He himself could not understand why American engineering equipment and small craft held in reserve at Finschhafen, Oro Bay, Buna, Milne Bay and elsewhere could not be drawn upon. There was a danger that lend-lease and reverse lend-lease would become "a one-way traffic in America's favour". Sturdee had told him of a Treasury instruction he had received concerning the vacation by American forces of installations in his areas. The instruction directed that the hand-over certificates should contain the statement that no financial obligation was implied in the receipt, but the American authorities were insisting on the certificates showing the Americans' assessment of the value of the items, which appeared to him

to be very high. Sturdee had said that, rather than lose the opportunity of taking over valuable installations, he had given an unconditional certificate. The Americans were also calculating the cost of labour for services given by their units to the Australian Army, a procedure which made lend-lease calculations laborious. "The clerical work involved in calculating and documenting such matters must be considerable and would appear to indicate that there is no shortage of manpower available to the American Army." He had suggested to the Treasurer that the whole question required examination on a high inter-governmental plane.

When the debate was resumed in the House on 26th April, Holt advocated an immediate cessation of offensive operations; the enemy should be contained where he was. Rankin suggested that the offensives had been undertaken because the troops were approaching the line beyond which the militia might not serve. Dedman described this as "a base insinuation". Coles said that the Americans were not leaving one pocket of Japanese in the Philippines and the Australians must not leave any Japanese in their territory. On the proposal that Australians should be sent to Mountbatten's Command, he said that Burma and Malaya were just as likely as New Guinea to fall into the backwaters of the struggle, and the operations there might not have any more effect on the outcome of the main struggle than those in New Guinea.[6]

Menzies described the debate as having sifted out the real nature of the problems. These were two: that of equipment and that of the right use of the Australian Army. It appeared that, subject to one or two points, the forces were adequately equipped for the task assigned to them. He would feel better if the troops, instead of doing something that could be left until after victory had been achieved, were engaged in a real drive against the enemy—for example, in Malaya or the Netherlands East Indies.

On 15th April Blamey had inserted into a broadcast speech appealing for subscriptions to a war loan a counter-attack against those who had been criticising him in the newspapers and in Parliament. This utterance was referred to by several speakers in the House on 26th and 27th April. Menzies considered that Blamey had used "intemperate, unjust and misleading language", and had committed a blunder that was hard to believe from "a man so gifted and so able".

A. G. Cameron, always one of Blamey's harshest critics, declared that Blamey's appointment was "the worst appointment made by the Menzies Government".

Several Ministers declared that Blamey was entitled to reply to criticism.[7]

Meanwhile the roles of the 7th and 9th Divisions had been settled. After many changes of plan it had been arranged that a brigade group

[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 181, pp. 1099-1125.

[7] After the broadcast Cameron had made a press statement charging Blamey with not being in the forward areas enough. Thereupon Colonel Rasmussen, Army Director of Public Relations, put out a press statement by "the Official Army spokesman" replying to this charge and belabouring Cameron. This led to a long-drawn-out Ministerial inquiry which has some interest because of its discussion of what commanders may and may not say in public. It is recorded in Vol VII of the Army series of this history.

of the 9th Division should seize Tarakan in Dutch Borneo; the remainder of the division should capture the Brunei Bay area and the 7th Division should take Balikpapan.

A few days after the debate on the Army ended came news of the landing of Australian troops at Tarakan. This made it appear that Australian infantry was again in the forefront of the battle and thereafter little was heard in public in criticism of the role of the divisions in the New Guinea territories. But the argument had still to be thrashed out in the privacy of the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council. On 7th May Chifley, acting as Prime Minister during Curtin's illness, asked Blamey to attend a meeting of the War Cabinet, present an appreciation of the operations in New Guinea, and answer questions. On 22nd May the War Cabinet had before it an appreciation by Blamey dated 18th May on "Operations of Australian Military Forces in New Guinea, New Britain and the Solomon Islands", and Blamey was there to answer questions.

In his paper Blamey said that the object was to conduct operations with a view to:

(*a*) Destroying the enemy where this can be done with relatively light casualties, so as to free our territory and liberate the native population and thereby progressively reduce our commitments and free personnel from the Army;
(*b*) where conditions are not favourable for the destruction of the enemy, to contain him in a restricted area by the use of a much smaller force, thus following the principle of economy.

The American operations in New Guinea and the Solomons, he said, had been aimed at securing areas for air bases and ports and at protecting them by establishing a close perimeter round them, but not at seeking out and destroying the enemy beyond the perimeters. But when the Americans reached the Philippines their policy changed and they set out to free those islands completely of the enemy, a change of policy apparently based on political rather than military grounds. Just as it was necessary to destroy the Japanese in the Philippines, so it was necessary to destroy them in Australian territories where the conditions were favourable for such action and so to liberate the natives. "Were we to wait until Japan was finally crushed, it could be said that the Americans, who had previously liberated the Philippines, were responsible for the final liberation of the natives in Australian territories, with the inevitable result that our prestige both abroad and in the eyes of the natives would suffer much harm." He had decided against a policy of passive defence on the grounds that to do so with any troops and particularly Australian troops would quickly destroy their morale, create discontent and decrease their resistance to disease. The enemy would be able to continue the domination of the natives and inflict a steady flow of casualties by raids. To adopt this course would lower the prestige of Australia throughout the world and, in the native mind, would lower the prestige of the Government to such an extent that it might be difficult to recover it when fighting ceased.

The destruction of the enemy could not be achieved by major operations

at a few points because his forces had been dispersed to gain maximum domination of the natives whom he had used to aid his policy of self-sufficiency and in active operations. It would have been necessary to follow the enemy from the shore into the jungle to destroy him. The necessary naval forces could not be made available for all-out offensives and the directive of the Commander-in-Chief S.W.P.A. did not allow of this course.

The third course was by aggressive patrolling to gain information of enemy strengths and dispositions, about which little was known by American formations, and by systematically driving him from his garden areas and supply bases, to force him into starvation and destroy him where found. Then eventually the aim would be to bring about his total destruction. It was decided that the First Army would adopt this course. On New Britain, however, where it was not considered possible to destroy the enemy force at Rabaul with the forces available, it was decided to drive the enemy patrols back into the Gazelle Peninsula and then regain control of the greater part of New Britain and contain a large force in the northern end of the island with a considerably smaller one. This was in accordance with the military principle: "A detachment from the main force is justified if it contains a force superior to itself."

Blamey then described in greater detail the operations in each area, and made a forecast of future operations. He hoped to reduce the force on Bougainville first from five to two brigades and ultimately to two native battalions. On the mainland of New Guinea he hoped to reduce the force first to one brigade group plus two native battalions, and, finally, to two native battalions. On New Britain a force of one division of two brigades, one native battalion and guerilla parties would be needed, with a reserve of one brigade at a convenient centre in case the enemy should try to break out of the Gazelle Peninsula. By the end of the year he hoped the forces employed could be reduced to two divisions consisting of five brigade groups.

In the discussion of this paper by the War Cabinet, Blamey said that six battalions of native troops were being organised and three of these were already in the field. The forces were short of small craft and he considered that this shortage could have been remedied by issues from United States stocks. He had represented this to General MacArthur without success. Craft were available in Australia but shortage of shipping to take them forward was a limiting factor. Otherwise the Australian forces now had all they required. Blamey said that he did not agree with MacArthur that the Japanese forces were "strategically impotent" since they were organised and had adequate supplies and large Australian forces were required to contain them.

At the same meeting of the War Cabinet plans for the employment of the 7th Division were discussed. In February Blamey had been informed that G.H.Q. proposed to use the 6th Australian Division in the Borneo operation. On the 27th Curtin, on Blamey's advice, had written to Mac-

Arthur that the proposed use of the 6th Division would make heavy demands on manpower and he felt that they should adhere to the basis of their previous discussion and limit the Australian component of the spearhead forces to the 7th and 9th.[8] MacArthur had accepted the suggestion that the 6th Division should remain where it was and on 17th April Curtin had written to Blamey to ask whether he wished the Government to make any representations to MacArthur about the use of Australian forces, and whether the operations in New Guinea had MacArthur's approval. Blamey had replied that he had no recommendations about the Borneo operations. The operations in New Guinea had been discussed with MacArthur and no specific instructions had been given about them. The 6th Division's operations (a landing near Wewak) had MacArthur's approval since they could not be carried out without the allocation by him of the necessary landing craft.

On 16th May, however, Blamey advised the Government that Australia should reduce her military commitments in the light of the end of the war in Europe, which would mean that the allocation of national forces by the Allies would be on a lower scale. If 50 American and 20 British divisions were employed in future, Australia's contribution on a population basis should be about three. Three divisions and part of a fourth were already engaged in New Guinea and two more were either engaged in Borneo or about to move there. If it were accepted that the Australian military contribution should be greatly reduced it would be most desirable that the 7th Division should not be committed to the Balikpapan operation.

Chifley, as Acting Minister for Defence, informed MacArthur that Blamey had advised him that if there was now to be a reduction in the Australian Army the 7th Division should not be employed until the overall plan was known. MacArthur replied that it was not now possible to substitute another division for the 7th and it would be put in to the attack on Balikpapan unless the Australian Government withdrew it from assignment to his command. Chifley replied that his Government agreed to the use of the 7th as planned.

At the meeting of the War Cabinet on the 22nd Blamey said that he did not consider that any further representations should be made to MacArthur about the 7th Division. He had raised the question solely from the aspect of any desire of the Government to bring Australia's contribution in the Pacific on to a relatively comparable basis to that of the United Kingdom and United States. The War Cabinet approved the decision of the Acting Minister for Defence.

At the same meeting Blamey expressed the view that men who had served for more than four years had a claim for release, but this might be difficult to arrange if six divisions were still to be allotted for operations. Repatriated prisoners of war should be given the option of discharge.[9]

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[8] Curtin then brought up the question of what Blamey described as "the gradual insinuation of American control and the elimination of Australian control" of the Australian Army. See G. Long, *The Final Campaigns*.

[9] War Cabinet Minute 4194, 22 May 1945.

Blamey's appreciation of the operations in New Guinea was considered by the Advisory War Council on 6th June. Earle Page said that insofar as there were political grounds for Blamey's policy that was a matter for the Government not Blamey. He was not prepared to take any responsibility for the operations. Spender referred to the contradiction in the policy of destroying the enemy in New Guinea and the Solomons and containing them in New Britain. He was unable to reconcile these policies. Hughes said that the important consideration was whether the operations had been successful at relatively small cost: they were proceeding satisfactorily, the losses had been small, and the Australian forces had the task well in hand. Beasley argued that by implication MacArthur approved the operations. He mentioned six previous meetings of the Council at which the operations had been discussed. The Government accepted full responsibility for the operations.

The Council agreed to the objectives set out in Blamey's appreciation (quoted above) and with the future policy set out therein, which would lead to the reduction of the Army in the areas concerned to two divisions including a total of five brigade groups by the end of the year, subject to developments in New Britain and New Ireland.[1]

As mentioned, a brigade group of the 9th Division had been engaged on Tarakan since May. On 10th June the remainder of the 9th Division made landings at Brunei Bay in British Borneo. On 1st July the 7th Division which, with attached troops, numbered 33,000 men began landing at Balikpapan. Practically the whole combat strength of the Australian Army was now in action or in immediate reserve to troops who were in action; and was to remain so until the cease fire. Those who would uphold the pride of the forces could rightly point out that at no time since 1918 had Australia maintained so many formations in contact with the enemy. On the other hand, the population in 1945 was 3,000,000 higher than in 1918; the mobilisation for a total war effort had been so much greater; the claims made about the Australian contribution so much higher; and the battlefields so much nearer. Moreover, as Blamey had repeatedly argued, the course of policy was such that a further reduction of combat strength was certain.

Already in military as well as civil planning the Government was taking post-war needs into account. On 31st May at the same time as it made its series of decisions on manpower, including the decision to release at least 50,000 men from the Army and Air Force by the end of 1945,[2] the War Cabinet on the advice of the Advisory War Council had noted that the future organisation and strength of those forces were linked with "basic considerations in post-war defence policy".[3] The War Cabinet noted the stage reached by the Defence Committee in the examination of the nature, strength and organisation of the post-war defence forces, including

[1] Advisory War Council Minute 1550, 6 Jun.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 4220.
[3] War Cabinet Minute 4224, 31 May.

the maintenance of production capacity for munitions, aircraft and naval shipbuilding. As indicated by the Defence Committee, stocks of munitions, aircraft and other material would probably meet the needs of the post-war forces for some time to come after the war. The review of the programmes of the services in regard to present and future rates of production was to be related to the post-war aspect of maintenance of nucleus productive capacity.

Meanwhile the War Cabinet had set "tentative objectives" for the strength of the forces which were being considered for the remainder of the war. On 5th June[4] it decided that the Defence Committee and War Commitments Committee should be informed that these objectives were the maintenance of the Navy at its present strength, the reduction of the Army's operational forces to three divisions and a corresponding reduction of the Air Force. This corresponding reduction could not be determined until the immediate reduction of 50,000 for the Army and Air Force had been apportioned and the effect of the return of personnel from overseas as a result of the defeat of Germany had been worked out.

The War Cabinet informed the two committees that in submitting recommendations in accordance with the manpower decisions of 31st May they could accept the above objectives as approved aims of Government policy but the ultimate strengths of all the services might be subject to further review, in the light of later circumstances and in relation to post-war defence, as indicated on 31st May. The two committees were to be informed that plans for the reduction of the forces and absorption of discharged members in the civil economy should be based on the realisation of the reduced strengths as soon as the operational plans would permit, the reorganisation of the forces could be carried out and orderly re-settlement of discharged members could be arranged.

This decision was communicated to Bruce in London, to Forde and Evatt at San Francisco who were asked to seek the agreement of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and to MacArthur, who was asked that the 7th and 9th Australian Divisions should be replaced by other troops as soon as his plans would allow.

The Australian Government proposed to the Combined Chiefs that the three divisions should eventually be deployed thus:

One brigade group in the Solomons
One brigade group in New Guinea
One division in New Britain
One division in operations against Japan
Probably one brigade group in south-east Asia.

The naval squadron could be attached to the British Pacific Fleet and air squadrons could be associated with the British Air Force to serve in the Pacific. If a new command was set up in the South-West Pacific Australia should be given operational control of her forces in all Australian territories.

[4] Minute 4237.

In fact the Joint Chiefs of Staff and British Chiefs of Staff had been considering a reorganisation of the command areas that would free MacArthur from responsibilities in the south, but Australia had not yet been consulted.[5]

The Australian proposal influenced the American and British planners in Washington who recommended that South-East Asia Command should be extended eastward to include Borneo, Java and Celebes, with Australia controlling operations elsewhere in the area. On 7th June the boundaries were again redefined so that S.E.A.C. embraced all the Netherlands Indies and New Guinea but the Americans retained command in the Admiralty Islands, where they had a large base, the eastern Solomons, and Ocean and Nauru Islands. The Americans proposed that the new boundaries should operate from about 15th August but the Joint Planners wished to wait until Singapore had been captured and Mountbatten was better placed to take over a larger area.

3—THE END OF HITLER'S WAR

The Italians had surrendered on 3rd September 1943 and this was announced by Badoglio from Rome five days later. In the meantime the Germans had reinforced their divisions and stiff resistance continued. The Allies entered Naples on 1st October; after landing at Anzio on 21st-22nd January 1944 the Allies pushed north.

On 6th June 1944 the invasion fleets crossed the Channel to Normandy —three weeks after the fall of Cassino in Italy and only some hours after the capture of Rome. On 15th August the Allies invaded the south of France as a prelude to advancing up the Rhone. In the north on 17th September an Allied attack with airborne troops was made in Arnhem. Elsewhere their advance was checked at Aachen, the Ardennes and Metz south of Nancy and it became clear the enemy would not be defeated before the northern winter. The armies in Italy were halted after taking Ravenna on 4th December and on the western fronts and in Italy the campaigns appeared static until the northern spring.

Meanwhile the Russians had swept through the Balkans and had failed to support an uprising of the local patriots in Warsaw. On 23rd August Rumania withdrew from the war followed by Bulgaria on 9th September 1944. On another front Finland withdrew on 4th September. The Australian Government was informed by the Dominions Office of the armistice terms with Rumania signed in Moscow on 12th September, terms which, so read the declaration, were "presented by the governments of the . . . three Allied powers acting in the interests of all the United Nations". Military operations would cease as from 24th August at 4 a.m.[6] From the Australian Legation in Moscow came the text of the armistice agreement with Bulgaria and protocol dated 28th October which was

[5] J. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol VI, pp. 226-33.

[6] Department of External Affairs file H45/1013/4—telegraphic text of the armistice.

signed there. "It will be noted," said the accompanying letter, "that unlike the cases of the armistices with Finland and Rumania this . . . was signed by a representative of the British and United States Forces."[7]

The armistice agreement between the U.S.S.R. and United Kingdom on the one hand and Finland on the other was signed on 19th September, military activities having ceased on 4th September 1944.[8]

Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin conferred at Yalta in the Crimea from 4th February, after the British and Americans had conferred at Malta on 30th January. There the leaders agreed that a zone in Germany, to be occupied by the French forces, should be allocated to France and that the French Provisional Government should be invited to become a member of the Allied Control Commission for Germany.

Moves were afoot, which the Dominions Office duly reported to the Australian Government, to complete a peace treaty with Italy, and at Yalta Roosevelt was reported as saying it was to the Allies' joint interests "to do what we properly could to foster Italy's gradual recuperation and return to the community of peace-loving states". In this matter Australia and New Zealand exchanged their draft replies for comment. "Australia," said the message to the Dominions Office, "preferred to leave final decisions, especially on territorial questions, until the ultimate peace settlement." Since that policy was declared in the Australia-New Zealand agreement a peace treaty with Germany had become remote, but the complete liberation of Italy was near and there might be advantages in not deferring settlement indefinitely. "We would certainly welcome any encouragement which an improved status would now give to those seeking a firmly based democratic regime in Italy." Australia would agree to a settlement provided that some satisfactory arrangement was reached at the United Nations conference for international trustee machinery which could be applied at an appropriate time to former Italian colonies, and provided that, as closely interested powers, the Soviet Union, France, Greece and Yugoslavia were not only consulted but associated from the beginning in the negotiation of terms. Australia was not convinced that a preliminary treaty was impossible or that a final treaty had advantages over a preliminary one. This the Dominions Office acknowledged politely, but set matters in a shrewder light by saying that opinion in the United States was being adroitly worked upon by Italian-American elements in the population "so that the United States was disposed to favour more lenient treatment of Italy than her record, in the general view, warranted". The sooner final settlement with Italy could be reached the less likelihood that the United States would be deterred from supporting the type of settlement that the United Kingdom had in mind.[9]

Two messages from the Dominions Office—one in October and the

[7] External Affairs file H45/1013/6—2 Nov 1944.

[8] External Affairs file H45/1013/14. The Australian Legation in Moscow asked for a certified copy and were told that this would reach Canberra through Soviet channels. It was received by the Department of External Affairs in July 1945.

[9] Department of External Affairs file H45/1013/1/9; Message 98, 24 Apr to Dominions Office; Message D131 from Dominions Office, 28 Apr.

other at the end of December—had contained the text of Soviet draft terms for an armistice with Hungary. An Australian comment on these terms, mainly indicating preference for the armistice to be limited to questions directly related to suspension of hostilities, and to the general question of consulting small powers, was not sent because of the prior arrival of the text of the agreement for the armistice. This was signed in Moscow on 20th January 1945 and the Australian Legation there duly reported receipt of a certified copy.[1] The Dominions Office also sent the text, and reported that a British military mission and political representative would proceed to Debrecen since Budapest was still under martial law.[2]

On 7th March a force from the First American Army established a bridgehead over the Rhine and on the 22nd the Allies had a second bridgehead. By the end of March the Ruhr was threatened from north and south and 325,000 enemy surrendered there on 13th April. By that time British and American forces had reached Bremen and Leipzig and the border of Czechoslovakia. By 30th March the Russians had reached the coast and were in Danzig. Budapest had fallen in mid-February; the Germans counter-attacked but the Russians were at the Austrian frontier by the end of March and took Komarno in Czechoslovakia on the 30th.

In Italy Alexander attacked towards the Po and on 29th April the German Command in Italy signed an instrument of unconditional surrender to take effect at noon on 2nd May. The news of negotiations had been sent simultaneously to the Dominions and to the United Kingdom delegation at San Francisco. The surrender included all Italy, Vorarlberg, Tyrol, Salzburg province and part of Carinthia. Hostilities were to cease at 1200 G.M.T. 2nd May. The message was uncertain about numbers of prisoners but prophesied "a big bag"; it turned out to be almost 1,000,000.[3]

In the meantime on Europe's western front discussions about final objectives of the British and American forces were affected by uncertainty about Russia's intentions and apprehension about her post-war activities,[4] although Britain proceeded on the hope that the alliance of war must be maintained in the peace.

Hitler died on 30th April after naming Admiral Doenitz as his successor and on 4th May an instrument of surrender covering the German forces in Holland, north-west Germany, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark was signed. On the 7th General Jodl signed the instrument of surrender on behalf of the German High Command at Rheims, to take effect at midnight on 8th-9th May.

As early as December 1943 the Dominions Office had sent to Australia, as to the other Dominions, copies of the documents being provided to its representative on the European Advisory Commission covering the

[1] External Affairs file H45/1013/7; Dominions Office cablegrams D1552 (17 Oct), D1890 (29 Dec), DNO119 (20 Jan 1945), D108 (21 Jan 1945).

[2] Dominions Office cable G6, 13 Feb 1945.

[3] External Affairs file H45/1013/1/11. Message D715, 1 May, from Dominions Office; Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol VI. Negotiations had begun as early as February.

[4] External Affairs file H45/1013/5.

surrender and military occupation of Germany. These received close study in the Departments of Defence and External Affairs and some comments were exchanged at the official level. The main Australian expression of view was when, in concert with Canada, objection was taken to a proposal that the instruments should be signed by representatives of the chief belligerents "on behalf of" other United Nations. Objection was also taken to Article 12 of the draft, which gave to the three great powers "supreme authority with respect to Germany". Australia recognised the practical difficulties in the participation of all the Allies in the final surrender, but said:

> We cannot accept the idea that whereas a great number of countries including ourselves have been fighting against Germany since the outbreak of war on various fronts and are contributing to her defeat in numerous other ways, the acceptance of the surrender of the enemy should be limited to only three powers.

Australia would be willing to have the Supreme Commander act on her behalf but thought "that such authority should be given formally by the governments concerned".

Regarding the control of Europe the Australian opinion was that "the exclusion of the other Allied governments from participating in the control machinery and from any association with the political and economic directives vitally affecting their interests must lead to inevitable and damaging resentment and prejudice not only present relations between the United Nations but the future peace of Europe". In Australia's view either the text should be amended or the three powers should make a public declaration "that in the exercise of the powers . . . provision will be made for associating them directly with the various agencies".[5]

The Dominions Office, however, reporting the approval of the text by the Soviet on 25th July pointed out that two courses had been open to the United Kingdom—to reopen discussions on the wording of the preamble and Article 12 or to approve the text as it stood and "to try to meet Dominions criticisms in some other way". The phrase "on behalf of" had been firmly resisted by the United States representative on the ground that this would require prior communication of terms to all United Nations and their explicit authority for signature; the Soviet representative had supported this argument and, while not admitting their contentions, the United Kingdom saw clearly that prolonging the argument was unlikely to lead to satisfactory results.[6] An Australian suggestion that there should be a joint declaration "by the governments other than the United Kingdom, United States and U.S.S.R. whose forces have taken an active part in the defeat of Germany simultaneous with the signature of the instrument stating that the governments (a) authorised the Supreme Command . . . to accept the surrender of Germany on their behalf and (b) had been advised and concurred in military terms of the armistice" was welcomed by the United Kingdom but, the United Kingdom message went on to point out, "the

[5] Defence Department file 102/301/5; cablegram 197 to Dominions Office, 18 Aug 1944.
[6] Defence file 102/301/5; Dominions Office cablegram 1247, 1 Sep 1944, received 2 Sep.

first step is to achieve agreement with the United States and Soviet on principle of associating other countries with exercise of supreme authority in Germany".[7]

An agreed text of the surrender instrument was sent out in October.[8] Subsequently some amendments were proposed by the French delegation to the European Advisory Commission when, after the declaration at the Yalta conference, the Provisional French Government took its place on the commission. These amendments were approved and the Dominions were so informed at the beginning of May. In the meantime there had been other discussions of the European Advisory Commission to report, including the provision of a draft declaration for issue by the governments of the three big powers to provide "for a situation in which there is no organised surrender".

Events set the pace. A message sent on 5th May and received in Canberra on the 6th explained that the news of the battlefield surrender on the 4th of the German forces in Holland, north-west Germany and Denmark had been received in London with the briefest possible notice before the time of announcement made by S.H.A.E.F. (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force). The latest information from S.H.A.E.F. indicated that "the Germans were still reluctant to surrender to the Russians . . . but every step was being taken to encourage surrenders".[9]

Then, in a message dispatched on 7th May and received in Canberra on the same date, the Dominions Office announced:

> The surrender of all German forces in Europe to Allied Expeditionary Forces and the Soviet High Command was signed at 0141 hours this morning Monday 7 May by representatives of the German High Command and General Eisenhower and General Suslaparov to take effect at midnight on Tuesday-Wednesday May 8th-9th.
>
> Please treat the above with complete secrecy for the moment. No release of the news is being made pending simultaneous announcement by the United Kingdom, United States and Soviet Governments. This is at present fixed for 3 p.m. B.S.T. Tuesday 8th May. If any change in this arrangement is made I will let you know.[1]

Messages sent on the 8th and received on the 9th (also repeated to the United Kingdom delegation at San Francisco) announced the text of "Military Instrument of Surrender as signed at Rheims 0141 hours G.M.T. 7 May".[2] And yet another message sent on the 9th and received on the 10th announced that the "confirmatory instrument" had been signed at Berlin on Tuesday, 8th May "shortly before midnight"—this time by Air Marshal Tedder and Generals Zhukov, Spaatz and de Lattre,[3] representing the United Kingdom, Russia, the United States and France respectively.

In the Australian press on the morning of the 8th headings announced

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[7] Message 197, 18 Aug 1944, to Dominions Office, and D1391 from Dominions Office, 16 Sep 1944.
[8] With Dominions Office circular despatch, 2 Oct 1944.
[9] Dominions Office cablegram 751, 5 May, received 6 May.
[1] External Affairs file H45/1013/2/2; Dominions Office cablegram D769, 7 May 1945 (received 7 May) repeated to U.K. delegation at San Francisco.
[2] Defence file 102/301/5; Dominions Office cablegrams D779 and D780, 8 May 1945 (received 9 May).
[3] External Affairs file H45/1013/2/2; Dominions Office cablegram D787, 9 May 1945 (received 10 May).

the surrender of Nazi Germany; the news had come via Flensburg radio on the 7th and an announcement by the German Foreign Minister. An official announcement, according to the newspapers, had been delayed and would not be made by Mr Churchill until the next afternoon. The delay had been occasioned by an agreement between Mr Churchill, President Truman and Marshal Stalin that an announcement should be made simultaneously in London, Washington and Moscow.[4]

In Canberra on the night of Tuesday, 8th May, the House had been discussing the appointment of a Social Security Committee when the sitting was suspended for twenty minutes at 10.50 p.m. When the House reassembled Chifley, as Acting Prime Minister, said:

> It is with great pleasure that I announce to the House the complete defeat of Germany and the official cessation of hostilities in the war in Europe. That pleasure is tempered with regret that the Prime Minister . . . who has contributed so much to this war effort, is not able, due to illness, to make this announcement tonight.

He gave the text of the military instrument of surrender and continued:

> In accepting the unconditional surrender of Germany, the representatives of the Supreme Commands . . . have acted by the authority of their respective governments and in the interests of the United Nations. In this the Allied representatives have, of course, acted, in effect, on behalf of Australia as well as other United Nations which have contributed to the German defeat, and the Australian Government is, therefore, fully associated with the acceptance of the German surrender. The Australian Government has also been consulted on the general terms to be imposed on Germany and will be associated in an appropriate way with the machinery for the control of Germany which will operate during the Allied occupation.[5]

There was a minor embarrassment in relations with New Zealand as the result of this announcement. As a New Zealand message put it, at various times "the desirability of a joint declaration by the Dominion Governments following the announcement of the surrender of Germany was emphasised" and, referring to a draft declaration for issue in these circumstances which had been part of conference papers, asked to be informed at once "whether or not declaration in this sense is being issued in Australia and if so at what time".[6] The Australian reply, in view of the announcement by the Acting Prime Minister, explained that his statement had been "prepared at very short notice in the belief that the general instrument of surrender concerning which . . . Dominion Governments had been consulted . . . would in fact be concluded on May 7. . . . As it turned out an act of military surrender only was signed at Rheims and ratified at Berlin, a fact of which we were in ignorance until after the event. We regret that under the circumstances in which we acted it was not found possible to consult with the New Zealand Government. . . . It seems to us unlikely that any further declaration by the Australian Government would be appropriate unless the circumstances in which the general instrument of surrender is signed or declared in fact make it so."[7]

[4] *Age* (Melbourne), 8 May 1945.
[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 182, pp. 1494-5.
[6] Message No. 53 from New Zealand, dated 8 May (received 8 May).
[7] Letter of 17th May.

The declaration of the surrender of Germany was signed by representatives of the United Kingdom, United States, U.S.S.R. and France in Berlin on 5th June "acting by the authority of their respective governments and in the interests of the United Nations". This, as Makin announced, completed the military act of surrender concluded at Rheims on the 7th and ratified the following day in Berlin.[8] From the New Zealand Prime Minister on 6th June came the text of the press release he would make that day on the same matter.[9]

Supreme authority was now vested in an Allied Control Council for Germany and, said Makin, Australia welcomed the statement by the Allied representatives that they would consult with other countries in the exercise of this supreme authority.

> Australia will, further, take advantage of an offer by the United Kingdom Government to participate subject to the primary needs of the war effort against Japan in the British element of the Control Commission machinery.[1]

In making the announcement in Parliament Chifley had also expressed the Australian sentiments at this historic event. Victory had crowned the aims of those who had stood for many weary years against aggression. Let all pause to remember those whose lives had been given or whose bodies and minds had been broken and seared that we might live. After tributes to those engaged in the war effort he expressed a hope for the rebuilding of Europe and, so importantly, the re-establishment of free government with the concerted strength of the United Nations. Australian men and women, fighters and workers, could join with just pride in the parade of victory. Their place had been won with blood and sacrifice in every theatre of war. But thanksgiving was tempered by the stern reminder that the other enemy still remained. Australians were still in prison camps. They must be freed. The forces of Britain and the United States and he hoped soon those of Russia provided a key for the unlocking of prison camps and for the freeing of so many unhappy people. Peace would only come to the Pacific on the unconditional surrender of the Japanese. The alternative for Japan was to be "smashed into submission".

Menzies, supporting him, ended on the same theme. The task had changed but not ended. There were war-torn countries to be restored, peoples to be fed, the cruel wounds of five years of war to be healed and half a world to be brought back to sanity and justice. In the "months that remain for Japan" there were still heavy tasks to be done.

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[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 182, p. 2801.
[9] Defence file 102/301/5; Message 74, dated 6 Jun (received 6 Jun).
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 182, p. 2801.

CHAPTER 10

THE LAST PHASE IN THE PACIFIC

1—DEATH OF A LEADER

JOHN CURTIN had been seriously ill during the last quarter of 1944. He was absent from most of the October and all of the November meetings of the War Cabinet and the Advisory War Council, and from 13th November to 22nd January Forde was officially Acting Prime Minister. Curtin recovered, and in February, March and April attended all Cabinet meetings, but when he again became ill, Forde now being overseas, Chifley became Acting Prime Minister from 30th April.

The public was given an indication of the serious state of Curtin's health on 13th June when, in the course of a speech in the Senate, Senator Armstrong[1] said that the Prime Minister had been "in and out of hospital with a strained heart that offers little hope of his complete restoration to health".[2]

When Forde returned from San Francisco on 2nd July, ahead of his colleague, the Minister for External Affairs, he became Acting Prime Minister again and announced that there had been unsatisfactory progress in Curtin's health and in fact deterioration had occurred. Curtin died at the Prime Minister's Lodge in Canberra at 4 a.m. on the 5th. He had been Prime Minister for three years and 303 days.

After announcing the Prime Minister's death in the House of Representatives that day Forde said: "Today, the Australian nation mourns and offers to this common man, this son of the people, a tribute of affection, gratitude and honour. . . . For this man was truly one with the masses who populate our country. He had striven and struggled among them, and when he came to the highest place in the land he was still one of them." Forde recalled that Curtin's leadership of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party extending over the record term of nine years and nine months had begun "at a time of trouble in the party's fortunes". Curtin's "untiring work, shining example, and high ideals" had raised the party to its zenith.

Menzies said:

> As a Prime Minister, I owed very much to his friendship and understanding, always freely and informally extended. As an Opposition Leader, I have long admired his political skill, his capacity for securing unity of purpose and direction, his unflagging industry, his willingness to put upon a far from robust constitution burdens which most men would have been glad to avoid, his selfless devotion to the Australian people . . . one who sought nothing in politics except the good of all others, as he understood it; who followed his lights with unswerving fidelity; who really believed in justice; who saw politics clearly as a conflict of ideas and not as a sordid battle of personal hostilities and ignoble ambitions.
>
> It was possible, and from my point of view necessary, to attack on political

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[1] Hon J. I. Armstrong. Senator 1938-62; Minister for Munitions 1946-48, for Supply and Development 1948-49. B. Sydney, 5 Jul 1908.

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 182, p. 2913.

grounds John Curtin's politics or his public administration; it was impossible and unthinkable to attack his probity, his honesty of purpose, the man himself.[3]

Some of those who were close to Curtin believed that his sensitiveness to criticism and the worry caused by brooding over his problems had set up an inner strain which had impaired his physical strength. His feelings were often deeply hurt. At times he revealed the hurt; at other times he covered it. He may have been tormented, too, by doubt about his own capacity and questioning whether he had done enough. Towards the end of his service he practised and preached austerity to an increasing extent and in private was reported to have groped for religious consolation. When among his friends he was an engaging and often amusing companion, and he suffered from loneliness even when he sought it. He laid on himself heavier burdens than he asked others to bear.

The Prime Minister's body lay in state in the King's Hall in Parliament House from 11 a.m. on the 6th. A memorial service was held there at 2 p.m. and then the casket was borne on a gun-carriage to the airport and flown to Perth, where the funeral took place on the 8th.

The House adjourned until 18th July and the Labour Party, which owed so much to the former Prime Minister's capacity to keep it united, set about deciding who should succeed him. As early as 4th May Lang's paper the *Century* had named three likely candidates: Forde, Evatt and Chifley, and later added Rosevear.[4]

On 6th July the Governor-General commissioned Forde to form a Ministry to carry on the Government. The portfolios allotted were those previously held by Ministers except that Beasley became Minister for Defence in addition to Vice-President of the Executive Council.

The newspapers reported that on 10th July Chifley told Forde that he would stand for election as leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labour Party. The party met on the afternoon of 13th July. Williams[5] urged that the election be postponed until Evatt, then at sea, and Pollard and Senator Nash,[6] then in the United States, had returned, but this was not agreed to. Forde, Chifley and Makin indicated that they were candidates for election but Evatt's name was placed in the ballot under a rule that absent members had to be regarded as candidates unless they had stated that they did not wish to stand. Chifley was selected on the first count. The newspapers reported that the voting was: Chifley, 45; Forde, 16; Makin, 7; Evatt, 2. The caucus then decided that the present Ministers should continue in the Cabinet. Johnson, a veteran official of the Australian Workers' Union, who had represented Kalgoorlie since 1940, was chosen to fill the vacancy caused by Curtin's death.

That day Chifley was commissioned to form a new Ministry. Chifley retained the portfolio of Treasurer, Senator Collings became Vice-President

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[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 183, pp. 4112-15.

[4] The *Century* ran a campaign which presumed Curtin's resignation on the grounds of ill-health—see 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th May, 1st June.

[5] T. F. Williams. MHR 1943-49. B. Young, NSW.

[6] R. H. Nash. Senator 1943-51. B. Ascot Vale, Vic, 2 Jul 1890. Died 12 Dec 1951.

of the Executive Council and was succeeded in Interior by Johnson. Other re-allocations were made necessary by changes in the structure of the administration introduced that day: the Department of War Organisation of Industry was abolished; it had ceased to have a Minister in February. The Department of Works became Works and Housing, Lazzarini, who had been Minister for Works, retaining the new portfolio. A Department of Immigration was established with Calwell, who retained Information, as Minister. Indeed, the principal change was perhaps the one introduced by Forde, whereby the Defence portfolio ceased to be held by the Prime Minister. The end of the war was near and the main tasks now concerned reconstruction.

2—THE SURRENDER OF JAPAN

It is now known that an influential group in Japan had begun in February 1943 to seek a means of bringing the war to an end but it was not until two years later that rumours that the Japanese Government was seeking peace began to circulate. The Australian External Affairs officer in London advised on 23rd March 1945 that there were reports that peace offers were being made in Berne, but they should be discounted. Early in April the Japanese Cabinet resigned; the former Prime Minister, General Koiso, was replaced by an aged admiral, Baron Suzuki. On 20th April the Dominions Office informed Dominion Governments that the Swedish Minister at Tokyo had reported to his government that the new Prime Minister was in favour of making peace, but what kind of peace was not indicated.[7] In May a message from the Dominions Office reported a United States State Department memorandum as saying that in Lisbon the Japanese were "anxious to know exactly what the Americans planned to do in the Far East. There could be no question of unconditional surrender as the Emperor would never agree to it. . . ."[8] Then on 10th July the United States Secretary of State made a statement the purpose of which, said the Dominions Office, "was to end current speculation by the public that a *bona fide* peace offer had been received from Japan". Any offers which had come had been "from sources which had given *no* satisfactory evidence that they spoke with authority".

The leaders of the three great powers met at Potsdam from 17th July to 2nd August, Mr Churchill representing Great Britain until the defeat of his Government on 25th July, and subsequently Mr Attlee, who became the new British Prime Minister.

At that stage the Australian Government did not know that on 12th July the Japanese Emperor had sent a proposal to Moscow that Prince Konoye should visit that city as a special envoy. The Russians found the Japanese request too vague and on the 21st the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow was informed that it was desired that, through the good offices of the Soviet Government, the war be brought to an end. On the 17th, the

[7] External Affairs file P45/10/1; Message D644, 20 Apr.
[8] External Affairs file P45/10/1; Message D872 19 May, received 20 May.

opening day of the conference at Potsdam, Stalin mentioned the Japanese approach to Churchill, who passed the news on to President Truman next day. The Allies had clear indications, however, that Japan would fight on rather than accept unconditional surrender.[9] The Americans thereupon drafted a declaration which "departed significantly from the bare formula of unconditional surrender which had apparently proved the main obstacle to peace".[1] This was approved by the British and Chinese leaders and was broadcast on the evening of 26th July. After warning the Japanese that the application of Allied power would mean the destruction of the Japanese armed forces and the devastation of the Japanese homeland the declaration said:

Following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.

There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world.

Until such a new order is established *and* until there is convincing proof that Japan's war-making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth.

The terms of the Cairo Declaration[2] shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine.

The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.

We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners. The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.

Japan shall be permitted to maintain such industries as will sustain her economy and permit the exaction of just reparations in kind, but not those which would enable her to re-arm for war. To this end, access to, as distinguished from control of, raw materials shall be permitted. Eventual Japanese participation in world trade relations shall be permitted.

The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible Government.

We call upon the Government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.

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[9] See J. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol VI, pp. 299-306.

[1] Ehrman, p. 305.

[2] The Cairo Declaration of December 1943 said that the Allies were resolved that Japan should be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific that she had occupied since the beginning of the First World War, that all territories "stolen" from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa and the Pescadores should be restored to China, that she would be expelled from "all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed", and that "in due course" Korea should become free and independent.



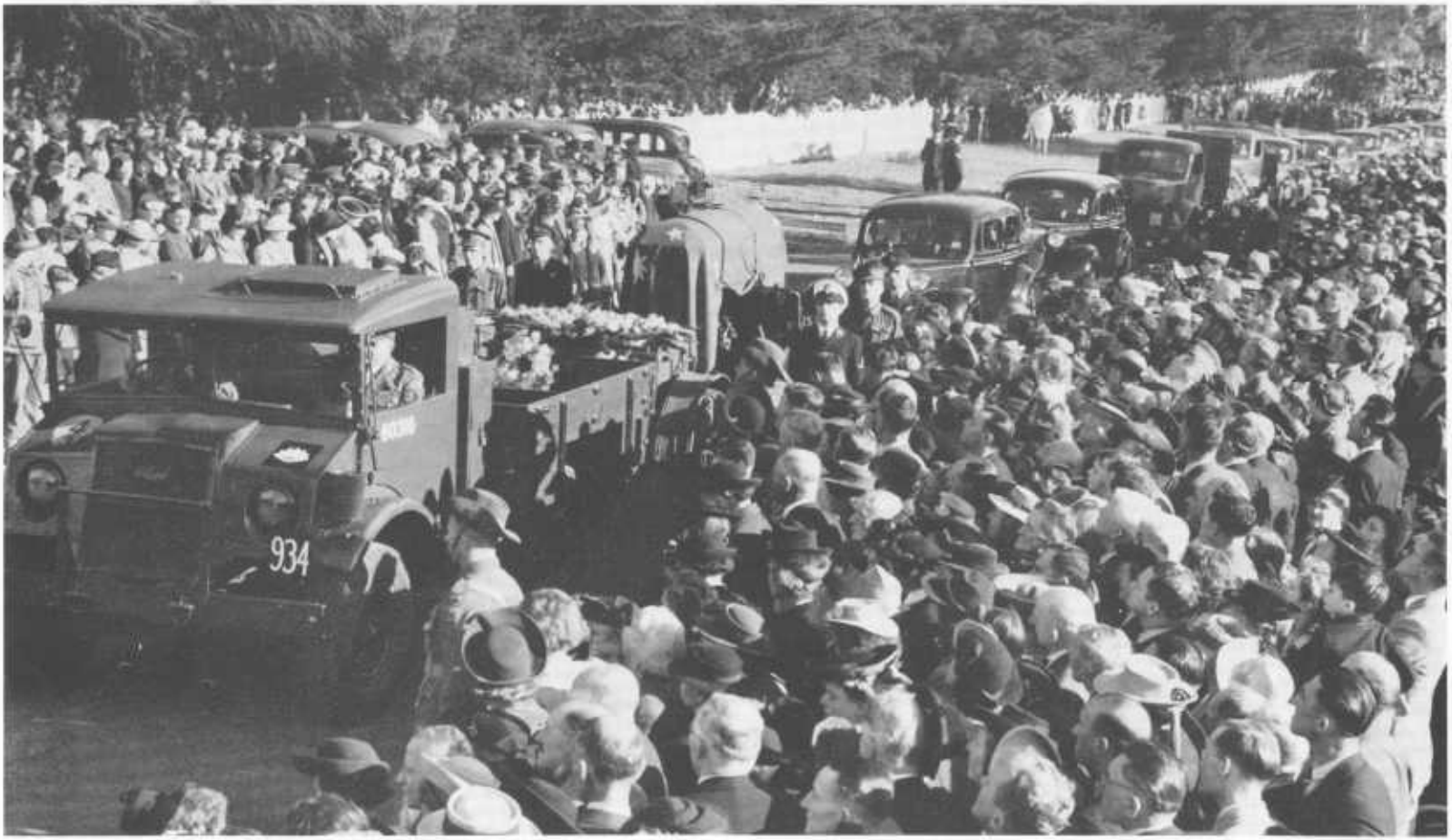
Australian War Memorial

The Memorial Service for the Prime Minister, Mr John Curtin, held in King's Hall, Parliament House, Canberra. Mr. Curtin died on 5th July 1945, seven weeks before the war ended.



Australian War Memorial

Leaving Parliament House, Canberra after the Memorial Service on 6th July 1945. Dr Earle Page, Mr Hughes, Mr Menzies, Mr Rosevear and Mr Forde (reading from front to back) are shown on the left of the picture.



Australian War Memorial

The funeral procession for Mr John Curtin arrives at Karrakatta cemetery, Perth, on 8th July 1945. A crowd of about 30,000 people gathered to pay their last respects.



Australian War Memorial

Mr J. B. Chifley was appointed Prime Minister after the death of Mr Curtin. The new Ministry is shown here after being sworn in at Government House on 13th July 1945: (*sitting*) Mr Beasley, Mr Chifley, the Duke of Gloucester, Mr Forde, Mr Makin; (*standing*) Mr Johnson, Mr Scully, Mr Holloway, Mr Drakeford, Mr Frost, Senator Keane, Mr Dedman, Senator Collings, Senator Ashley, Mr Calwell, Senator Fraser, Mr Ward, Mr Lazzarini. (Dr Evatt, who was overseas, and Senator Cameron are not in the picture.)



Australian War Memorial

News of Japan's surrender reached Australia early on 15th August 1945. Everywhere jubilant crowds gathered in the streets. The top pictures are of Sydney and Melbourne, the lower ones of Perth and Brisbane.

On 28th July the Japanese Prime Minister announced to the press that his Government had decided to ignore the declaration.

In Australia there was a sharp reaction on the part of Evatt as Minister for External Affairs, newly returned from his role of champion of the smaller nations at San Francisco. In a statement issued on 29th July he said:

> Ever since 1941 it has been the declared and accepted policy of the Australian Government that in all matters relative to the peace settlement, both in Europe and the Pacific, Australia, being an active belligerent, possesses the right to the status of a party principal to every armistice and peace arrangement. The validity of this policy has been accorded widespread recognition, and very recently assurances of its general acceptance were received from the United Kingdom Government.
>
> The recent Potsdam ultimatum to Japan makes it necessary to restate this fundamental policy. Although that ultimatum declared certain terms or principles of the peace settlement with Japan, it was published without prior reference to, still less the concurrence of, the Australian Government.
>
> . . . All that need be said about the actual terms of peace foreshadowed in the ultimatum is that they appear to treat Japan more leniently than Germany, in spite of the fact that the slightest sign of any tenderness towards Japanese imperialism is entirely misplaced, having regard to the outrageous cruelties and barbarities systematically practised under the imperialist regime, detailed evidence of which was obtained by the Australian Government and placed before the War Crimes Commission.

There were protests too from New Zealand; and Evatt cabled to Fraser that he fully shared Fraser's views and feelings regarding the manner in which the Potsdam ultimatum was issued and his remarks on the framing of peace terms covering both Europe and the Far East theatres of war.[4]

The Dominions Office in a message to both Australia and New Zealand said it was "unfortunate" that the declaration "should have been issued without previous communication with dominion governments. . . . Actually the proposed text was not available in London before issue nor was it known here what time issue would take place." Amendments suggested by Truman had been accepted on the 25th and he had "pressed for publication at the earliest possible moment".[5]

The Potsdam Conference ended on 2nd August and on that day the Australian Government learned that at Potsdam Stalin, as mentioned above, had revealed a proposal from the Japanese Government that Russia should act as mediator between Japan and Britain and the United States with a view to ending the war. The proposal had been refused.[6] On 6th August the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. President Truman had issued the necessary order to the United States Air Force on 24th July to be ready to "deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after about 3rd August".

On 8th August Molotov informed the United Kingdom and United States Ambassadors that the Soviet Government would consider itself at

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[4] External Affairs file P45/10/1/1; Evatt to Fraser 4 Aug.
[5] External Affairs file P45/10/1/1; DO 197 to New Zealand, repeated to Australia 277.
[6] External Affairs file P45/10/1; telegram D1357, I.25017, 2 Aug 1945.

war with Japan from 9th August.[7] Molotov had been reported in high spirits when he handed a copy of the declaration to the United Kingdom Ambassador. The Japanese Ambassador had received the communication calmly and remarked that in the circumstances he did not think war in the Far East would last long.[8]

At 6 p.m. on the 9th the Japanese Imperial Headquarters communiqué announced an "unwarranted" Russian advance into Manchuria.[9]

On the morning of 9th August another atomic bomb was dropped—on Nagasaki. On the 10th the Australian Government's views on policy towards Japan were cabled to the Dominions Office: in its opinion the Emperor should have no immunity from responsibility for Japan's act of aggression and proved war crimes.

On the 10th (Australia 1 a.m. 11th August) the Tokyo radio announced that a communication had been addressed through the Swedish and Swiss Governments to the United States, British, Chinese and Soviet Governments accepting the terms of the Potsdam Declaration on the understanding the "said declaration did not comprise any demand which prejudiced the prerogatives of the Emperor as a sovereign ruler".[1] The British Cabinet considered this broadcast which was the only intimation received of Japan's desire to surrender. China and Russia were asked for their views.[2] In replying to a request for her views Australia indicated that she desired full responsibility on the part of the Emperor. If he were retained in this instance it should carry no commitment whatever by the Allies. It appeared, said the Australian message, that Japan was trying to impose a condition or obtain a peace by negotiations.[3] The British announcement pointed out that so far no official communications had been received from the Japanese.[4]

The text of the Japanese message, dated 10th August, was received in Australia on the 12th and throughout that day Dominions Office messages concerning the proposed reply arrived. The United States had demanded that the Emperor and the Japanese High Command sign the surrender terms; the United Kingdom suggested an amendment that the Emperor should authorise and ensure the signature of the Japanese Government and the Imperial Headquarters; Molotov had said that the offensive in Manchuria would continue and Russia had accepted the United States draft reply; the United States Ambassador had called on the Chinese President and he had concurred in the terms of the reply. Finally came the text of the note of reply which went to Japan via the Swiss Government.[5]

It was assumed, said a message from the Dominions Office, that the United States would take a lead in all general matters regarding surrender, and in view of the urgency they had arranged that the Joint Staff Mission

[7] External Affairs file P45/5/2; telegram G102 from Secretary of State, I.25648, 8 Aug 1945.
[8] External Affairs file P45/10/1; from Bruce 91A, I.25819, 9 Aug 1945.
[9] External Affairs file P45/10/1.
[1] External Affairs file P45/10/1; short wave 1945/8/10; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 Aug 1945.
[2] External Affairs files P45/10/1 and P45/10/32; telegram D1408 from Dominions Office.
[3] External Affairs files P45/10/1 and P45/10/32; telegram 229 to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.
[4] External Affairs file P45/10/1; message D1409 from Dominions Office.
[5] External Affairs file P45/10/1; messages D1412, D1415, D1421, D1422, D1423, D1429.

in Washington would keep in close touch with the Dominions who, in turn, were to keep Washington informed of their views and comments.[6] The reply of the Prime Minister to the Australian comments[7] indicated the situation overseas. Hours were of importance now, Attlee said, thus often precluding consultation.[8]

On the 13th the United Kingdom's draft of the act of surrender was received with the request that Australian comments go direct to Washington. The United Kingdom had emphasised to the State Department that they considered details of the formal act of surrender of such importance that both text and procedure should be settled by agreement, and opportunity should be given to the United Kingdom and the Dominions to agree on it before publication by the United States.[9] The Australian Government emphasised the need for a general instrument of surrender and specific requirements on war criminals.[1]

On the 11th, however, the American Government had already decided on the terms of surrender. These required that the authority of the Japanese Emperor and Government would be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. The Emperor would be required to authorise and ensure the signature by the Goverment of Japan and Japanese Imperial General Headquarters of the surrender terms necessary to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration.

At an Imperial Conference on the morning of the 14th the Japanese Emperor resolved differences among his advisers by accepting the Americans' terms. The news reached Washington about 4 p.m. that day. On the 15th the Emperor broadcast the decision to the people of Japan.

That day (the 15th) a message to Australia from the Dominions Office announced that the United States Government had completed a draft act of surrender. The State Department had said they were not in a position to consult their allies. The United Kingdom Minister in Washington had stressed the importance to his Government and the Dominions and had been shown the draft, but the State Department had explained they were unwilling to enter into formal consultation with the United Kingdom Government as they did not intend to invite comments from the Soviet Union or China.[2]

Soon after the news reached Australia, Chifley spoke to the people over the national radio network:

> Fellow citizens, the war is over.
>
> The Japanese Government has accepted the terms of surrender imposed by the Allied Nations and hostilities will now cease. The reply by the Japanese Government to the Note sent by Britain, the United States, the U.S.S.R. and China has been received and accepted by the Allied Nations.
>
> At this moment, let us offer thanks to God.

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[6] External Affairs file P45/10/1; telegram D1420 from Dominions Office.
[7] Australian messages 225, 226, 229.
[8] Attlee to Chifley; No. 289.
[9] Telegram D1434 from Dominions Office.
[1] Australian message 233, replying to Dominions Office D1430, D1431, D1433, D1434.
[2] Message from Dominions Office, D1444.

Let us remember those whose lives were given that we may enjoy this glorious moment and may look forward to a peace which they have won for us. Let us remember those whose thoughts, with proud sorrow, turn towards gallant, loved ones who will not come back. On behalf of the people and Government of Australia, I offer humble thanks to the fighting men of the United Nations, whose gallantry, sacrifice and devotion to duty have brought us the victory. Nothing can fully repay the debt we owe them, nor can history record in adequate terms their deeds from the black days that followed September 1939 and December 1941 until this moment.

We owe, too, a great debt to those men and women who performed miracles of production, in secondary and primary industries, so that the battle of supply could be won and a massive effort achieved. Materials, money and resources have been poured out so that the fighting men would not go short. Australia's part, comparatively, in terms of fighting forces and supplies, ranks high and the Australian people may be justly proud of everything they have done.

I am sure that you would like me to convey to the commanders of the fighting forces the warmest thanks for their skill, efficiency and great devotion. Especially do I mention General Douglas MacArthur, with whom we had so much in common and with whom we shared the dangers when Australia was threatened with invasion.

In your name, I offer to the leaders of the United Nations our congratulations and thanks. We join with the United States in a common regret that their inspiring leader, the late Mr Roosevelt, did not live to see this day. We thank his successor, President Truman, for the work he has done. Australians, too, will feel their happiness tinged with sorrow that another man, who gave his all, was not spared to be with us today. That man was John Curtin. To Mr Churchill, Generalissimo Stalin and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek go the unstinted thanks of free people everywhere for what they have done for the common cause. Especially do we honour Mr Churchill, with whom in the dark days—to use his own words—we had the honour to stand alone against aggression.

And now our men and women will come home; our fighting men with battle honours thick upon them from every theatre of war. Australians stopped the Japanese in their drive south, just as they helped start the first march towards ultimate victory in North Africa. Australians fought in the battles of the air everywhere and Australian seamen covered every ocean. They are coming home to a peace which has to be won. The United Nations Charter for a World Organization is the hope of the world and Australia has pledged the same activity in making it successful as she showed in the framing of it. Here in Australia, there is much to be done. The Australian Government, which stood steadfast during the dread days of war, will give all that it has to working and planning to ensure that the peace will be a real thing. I ask that the State governments and all sections of the community should cooperate in facing the tasks and solving the problems that are ahead. Let us join together in the march of our nation to future greatness.

You are aware of what has been arranged for the celebration of this great victory and deliverance. In the name of the Commonwealth Government, I invite you to join in the thanksgiving services arranged for, truly, this is a time to give thanks to God and to those men against whose sacrifice for us there is no comparison.[3]

The Dominions Office had informed Mr Chifley on 12th August that President Truman had proposed that General MacArthur should be designated Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers to accept, coordinate and carry into effect the general surrender of the Japanese forces. Truman asked Churchill to name an officer to represent him at the surrender and Churchill had designated Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser. The United Kingdom Government hoped that Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa

[3] *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, No. 106, pp. 4-5.

would each arrange for a senior service representative to be attached to Admiral Fraser for this occasion.

Next day the Prime Minister of New Zealand informed the Australian Prime Minister that he was sending a representative. On the 14th, however, Dr Evatt sent a note to Sir Frederick Shedden to say that he thought that Australia's representative "should go in his own right and not as an appendage of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser", and on the same day Mr Beasley telephoned to Shedden to say that after consultation with Evatt he agreed that Blamey should represent Australia in his own right and not be attached to Fraser. The Dominions Office and MacArthur were promptly informed.

On 16th August the Australian Government learnt through the Dominions Office that the American Government did not see its way clear to grant independent status to Dominion officers. It contemplated that the act of surrender would be signed by General MacArthur and his signature endorsed below by Admiral Fraser, Admiral Nimitz, a Chinese general and a Soviet general.

Blamey had moved to Manila at MacArthur's invitation on 17th August and there he told MacArthur that, in view of the size of the other delegations preparing to go to Japan, he would like the Australian one to be increased. MacArthur agreed and specifically mentioned Air Vice-Marshal Bostock and Major-General F. H. Berryman (Chief of Staff, Advanced Land Headquarters). The Government signalled to Blamey its approval of the attachment of these two and of the addition of Commodore Collins and Captain R. R. Dowling, of H.M.A.S. *Hobart*; if time had allowed it would have nominated the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Jones. The same day the War Cabinet added the name of Air Commodore R. J. Brownell to the Tokyo delegation.[4] (Later he was replaced by Air Vice-Marshal Jones as there proved to be time for him to make the journey; and Dowling was replaced by the Acting Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear-Admiral G. D. Moore.)

On 17th August the War Cabinet had approved the dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Dominions of a long cablegram describing the proposed Australian contribution to the occupation force for Japan, mentioned earlier, agreeing to other British proposals and adding:

> We feel we must point out that, in making these contributions, Australia is doing so not as a subsidiary but as a principal Pacific Power which has for so long borne the heat and burden of the struggle against Japan. We cannot but help feeling that this has not had sufficient recognition in the Armistice arrangements and this view is reinforced by the advice of your cablegram 302 of 16th August regarding our representation in our own right at the acceptance of the surrender of Japan.

Dr Evatt sent a telegram to Blamey on the 18th stating that the report received through the Dominions Office that the State Department objected to Blamey's representing Australia separately at the surrender was contra-

[4] War Cabinet also approved that Australian service representatives at the surrender in South-East Asia Command should be Air Vice-Marshal A. T. Cole, Brigadier J. D. Rogers and Acting Captain A. E. Buchanan.

dicted by the State Department, which was taking steps to ask MacArthur to meet Australia's wishes to the maximum possible extent.

On the 20th Blamey replied that MacArthur had recommended that Australia, Canada, Holland and France should also sign; and next day added that the State Department had now informed MacArthur that representatives of those Powers and also New Zealand would sign the Instrument of Surrender.

General MacArthur had been informed from Washington on 15th August of the Japanese capitulation and his own appointment as Supreme Commander, Allied Powers, who would accept the general surrender. At 2.30 p.m. that day G.H.Q. issued its final communiqué—No. 1228. It announced the capitulation and added that no further communiqués would be issued from that headquarters. In response to signals from MacArthur a delegation of 16 Japanese reached Manila by air on 19th August to receive the requirements for carrying the terms of surrender into effect. The delegation departed on the afternoon of the 20th. It was arranged that the Instrument of Surrender would be signed on 31st August aboard the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. Because of a typhoon the date was later altered to 2nd September.[5]

On 28th August a small party of American engineers and others were landed at Atsugi airfield near Yokohama to prepare for the arrival of the 11th U.S. Airborne Division, the main body of which began to land on 30th August. That day General Eichelberger and then General MacArthur arrived. MacArthur made his headquarters in a hotel in Yokohama. At 8.30 a.m. the Allied delegates were drawn up on the quarter-deck where, in the open under a grey sky, a table covered with green baize was set. The eleven Japanese representatives—five civilians in black suits and silk hats and six officers in field uniform—appeared on deck at 8.55 and stood in two rows about three yards from the table, their faces expressionless. At 8.59 MacArthur arrived and invited the Japanese to sign. At once two of the civilians stepped to the table, examined the documents for half a minute and then returned to their places. Thereupon Mr Shigemitsu, the Japanese Foreign Minister, limped forward and signed the two copies of the Instrument of Surrender.[6] Then the Chief of the General Staff, General Umezu, did likewise on behalf of the armed forces.

General MacArthur then announced that the representatives of the United Nations would sign and, calling to his side General Wainwright (who had surrendered on Luzon in 1942) and General Percival (who had surrendered at Singapore), he himself signed as Supreme Commander. MacArthur then announced each Allied representative as he advanced to sign. The order of signing was:

United States	Admiral Chester Nimitz
China	General Hsu Yung-Chang
United Kingdom	Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser

[5] The Australian party in the *Missouri* comprised in addition to General Blamey, and the officers mentioned above, Colonel Dwyer (Blamey's Personal Assistant) and Captain J. Balfour (Australian historical officer). This account of the ceremony is drawn from one written by Balfour.

[6] Shigemitsu had lost a leg in a bomb explosion caused by Koreans in the 1930s.

U.S.S.R.	Lieut-General K. N. Derevyanko
Australia	General Sir Thomas Blamey
Canada	Colonel L. Moore Cosgrave
France	General Jacques Le Clerc
Netherlands	Admiral Conrad Helfrich
New Zealand	Air Vice-Marshal L. M. Isitt

MacArthur made a short speech and that ended the ceremony. Soon after the Japanese had left the *Missouri* some hundreds of Allied aircraft flew over Tokyo Bay in squadron formation.

In a statement issued on 24th August Evatt described Australia's successful effort to achieve direct representation at the surrender in Tokyo. This, he said, was only one aspect of "the great question" raised by the Prime Minister when he had said on the 17th that Australia's war effort against Japan had not had sufficient recognition in the Armistice negotiations and arrangements. The Potsdam Declaration had been issued without any reference to Australia. Next came the Japanese Government's request that the privileges and prerogatives of the Emperor should not be prejudiced. On that matter the Australian Government had expressed its views promptly and clearly. However, the facts showed that little consideration could have been given to Australia's very strong submissions. Again there was the matter of the Council of Foreign Ministers, from which at present Australia, a principal belligerent against Japan, was excluded even in relation to the Japanese settlement, while China was included without having been a belligerent in Europe. In the Government's view that was unsatisfactory and they knew that this opinion was shared by New Zealand. Once again they would be in danger of being presented with cut-and-dried decisions in which they would have had no real participation and no effective voice.

The fact was, Evatt continued, that, apart from the United States, the main contribution to victory in the Pacific was that of Australia. In spite of this there was a deplorable tendency, now that the fighting was over, to relegate Australia to a subordinate status and either not to consult her at all or to consult her in a perfunctory way and not on the footing of equality. This process would have to be arrested, not only in the interests of Australia but of the British Commonwealth.

When the House of Representatives reassembled on 29th August Chifley described the events leading up to the surrender. He moved and the House agreed to an address to the King expressing loyalty and gratitude. He moved too that the thanks of the House be accorded to the members of the services and other war workers, and that the House acknowledge the heroism of the fallen. Menzies seconded the motion.

After having informed the House of the events that followed the issue of the Potsdam Declaration Chifley said that as soon as his Government saw that the Japanese were trying to preserve the Emperor's position they sent a strong expression of the view that no person or institution should have immunity from responsibility for Japanese aggression and war crimes, and made it clear that Australia was entitled to claim a full

and direct voice in decisions regarding Japan's future and a due part in the execution of those decisions. Throughout the period Australia was kept informed by the Dominions Office and her Ministers in Washington, Moscow and Chungking, but events often moved very fast and there was no time for adequate consideration of Australian suggestions and proposals, "even when these were received before the actual decisions had been made, which was not always the case".

Chifley listed the military commitments that the Government had accepted "with the object of ensuring that Australia shall play its proper part in the tasks arising from the Japanese capitulation and contribute to the execution of the surrender terms against Japan". The military commitments were: participation in the occupation of Japan and Singapore, occupation of key areas of enemy-held territories, and the release of Australian prisoners of war and internees. The Government proposed that a composite force of two cruisers, two destroyers, two brigade groups and ancillary units, and three fighter squadrons should be made available to take part in the occupation of Japan.[7]

Later in the day Chifley announced that the British Prime Minister had invited him to nominate a special representative to the Council of Foreign Ministers, due to meet in London in September. He had chosen Evatt for this task. Evatt, he said, would be in London when Bruce's term as High Commissioner expired and would perform the duties of High Commissioner until the arrival of Beasley who would become Resident Minister in London.[8]

After MacArthur had taken the general surrender off Tokyo and Mountbatten in Singapore had taken the surrender of the representative of Field Marshal Count Terauchi, commanding the Japanese *Southern Army*, the surrenders of the principal local commanders were arranged. So far as possible each Japanese general surrendered to his opposite number. Thus the commander of the *II Japanese Army* and naval representatives surrendered all their forces in the Netherlands Indies to General Blamey at Morotai on 9th September; and separate surrenders were taken by Australian commanders in Dutch Borneo, British Borneo, off Rabaul, at Torokina, at Wewak, in Timor and at Nauru and Ocean Islands.

Blamey was informed on 24th August that the Government was most anxious that early action be taken to ensure that Australian forces took the surrender of the Japanese on Timor and occupied the island. Blamey asked on the 27th whether this applied to the whole island or only the Dutch part; if the whole island, he would be glad of instructions in the event of objection or opposition by the Portuguese.

Shedden sent a message to Blamey on 28th August to say that the Government wished separate surrenders of Japanese forces in respect of both Portuguese and Dutch Timor. With regard to Portuguese Timor the

[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 184, pp. 4956-8.
[8] Beasley departed for London on 20th December.

Government had expressed to the United Kingdom Government the following views: The Japanese surrender in Portuguese Timor should be made to Australian forces; meanwhile no facilities should be given for the despatch of Portuguese forces to the colony; interim arrangements for the restoration of administration should be made directly between the Australian forces and whatever local Portuguese administration was still in existence. This interim arrangement was aimed at the conclusion of a long-term arrangement with the Portuguese Government including as a minimum "the objectives of the 1943 understanding". The Government had asked the United Kingdom Government to obtain the Portuguese Government's acquiescence to the first and third of these proposals.

On the 29th in response to Blamey's request for enlightenment Shedden informed him that the "1943 understanding" was that Australia recognised Portuguese sovereignty and would wish after the war to have agreements regarding common defence against possible future aggression, commercial relations and air communications. The Portuguese Government had accepted the principle that there should be such agreements.

On 1st September, however, Shedden informed Blamey that further negotiations were proceeding and the Government wished the sending of Australian troops to take the Japanese surrender in Portuguese Timor to be deferred. The surrender of the Japanese forces in Timor was carried out aboard H.M.A.S. *Moresby* in Koepang Bay on 11th September.

On 13th September General Northcott (the Chief of the General Staff) signalled Blamey that a Portuguese sloop had sailed from Colombo and expected to reach Dili on the 28th. Could arrangements be made for Australians to take the surrender there at short notice? Brigadier L. G. H. Dyke, who took the surrender of the Japanese commander on Timor on the 11th, had already ensured that the surrender included the 150 or so Japanese who were on guard and police duties in the Portuguese colony.

On 18th September the War Cabinet endorsed directions given by the Minister for Defence to the Chief of the General Staff that the Australian commander or his representative should go at once to Dili by Australian warship and inform the Portuguese Governor of the surrender of the Japanese forces. He should arrange for the landing of a small party to check that the terms of the surrender were effective, arrange with the Governor for the disposal of all Japanese in Portuguese Timor, of any Allied prisoners or internees and of enemy war material. He should also discuss with the Governor arrangements concerning Australian war graves and Japanese war crimes. If this action was taken without delay it would not be necessary to delay at Colombo Portuguese ships carrying an occupation force.[1]

The Chief of the General Staff had asked for directions on a number of points. What action should be taken if the Governor refused permission for troops to land; what action if the landing or action of the troops was opposed; what arrangements were desired concerning war graves and war

[1] War Cabinet Minute 4448, 19 Sep 1945.

crimes; was Dr Evatt's telegram of the 17th to be taken as a direction to land troops if considered necessary by the forces commander and possibly in defiance of the Governor; what action on the arrival of the Portuguese convoy?

The Minister for Defence had replied that if the Governor refused permission to land a formal protest should be recorded and information sent promptly to Australia. The Governor should then be asked to deliver on board the Australian corvette or accompanying ship all Allied prisoners or internees, Japanese troops and war material. Troops were not to be landed unless the Governor agreed, and if landed with his permission should remain until their tasks were finished.

Northcott had asked that the Australian commander should be given a civilian political adviser. Mr Forsyth[2] of the Department of External Affairs was appointed.

All went smoothly. Forsyth met the Portuguese Governor at Dili on 22nd September and had a satisfactory discussion. Next day Dyke went to Dili with Forsyth and others and a flotilla of five corvettes, visited the Governor, formally told him of the surrender and congratulated him on the restoration of his authority. The Governor agreed that Australian officers might move freely to and from places agreed upon by him to dispose of enemy troops and material and prisoners or internees.

On 24th September the Portuguese Ambassador in London had handed to Dr Evatt a note expressing pleasure that the two Governments were able in a friendly and understanding manner to settle the matter satisfactorily.

3—POST-SURRENDER PROBLEMS

As a result of the transfer of a great part of the South-West Pacific Area to Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command the Australian troops in Borneo and Morotai fell within Mountbatten's command. The Australian forces in the Australian New Guinea territories were under purely Australian command, as, in effect, they had been for the greater part of a year. Mountbatten was at first unwilling to take over the additional areas until about the end of October but, when Japan capitulated, he was ordered to accept the new responsibility on the next day—15th August.

After discussions with a military mission from the South-East Asia Command, the Defence Committee recommended and the Advisory War Council and War Cabinet approved of a division of responsibility between the South-East Asia Command and the Australian Command. In the first phase Australia would be responsible for Borneo and the islands to the eastward and the British would be responsible for Java, Bali and Lombok. In the second phase, which it was hoped to complete by October 1945, the British would extend their occupation in the western half of the Dutch territory. In neither the first or second phase would Australia take

[2] W. D. Forsyth, OBE. Sec-Gen South Pacific Commission, Noumea, 1948-51 and 1963-66; Aust Ambassador to Vietnam 1959-61, to Lebanon since 1967. B. Casterton, Vic, 5 Jan 1909.

action to occupy all the islands within its sphere. In the third phase the British would become responsible for the whole of the Netherlands East Indies (including Dutch New Guinea, but excluding Timor). The progressive assumption of responsibility by the British would be determined by the resources available but the South-East Asia Command accepted an obligation to take over the area as rapidly as possible. On the completion of the third phase, the date of which was indefinite, the responsibility of Australia would be limited to Papua and the Mandated Territories, and to any special action which might be necessary in Timor. Except in Papua and the Mandated Territories Australia limited her responsibility for civil affairs administration to action necessary to prevent disease and unrest and would hand over civil administration as soon as the initial period of military responsibility ended. In Borneo the general Australian intention was not to extend the existing area of responsibility except for special reasons such as the relief of prisoners of war and it was hoped to hand over to the British and Dutch not later than the end of October. In Dutch New Guinea Australian initial control would, for all practical purposes, be confined to Hollandia and Biak, which were of special interest as air force staging areas, and the general occupation of the territory would be left until British or Dutch troops were available.[3]

The acceptance of "initial responsibility" in Borneo and the islands to the eastward brought Australia into the internal post-war strife in the Netherlands East Indies. On 19th September Blamey sent a signal to the Commander of the *II Japanese Army* which controlled the Japanese military forces in that part of the area of Australian responsibility that lay west of the border of Dutch New Guinea informing him that the following areas of responsibility had been allotted to his subordinate commanders: British Borneo to the commander of the 9th Division, Dutch Borneo to the commander of the 7th Division; Timor and the Lesser Sundas east of Lombok to the commander of the Australian force at Koepang; Ambon, Ceram, Buru, Kai, Aru and Tanimbar Islands to the Australian commander at Ambon. Therefore the Japanese would directly control Celebes, Halmahera and Dutch New Guinea for the present. Later Australian forces were established also at Macassar, Menado and Ternate.

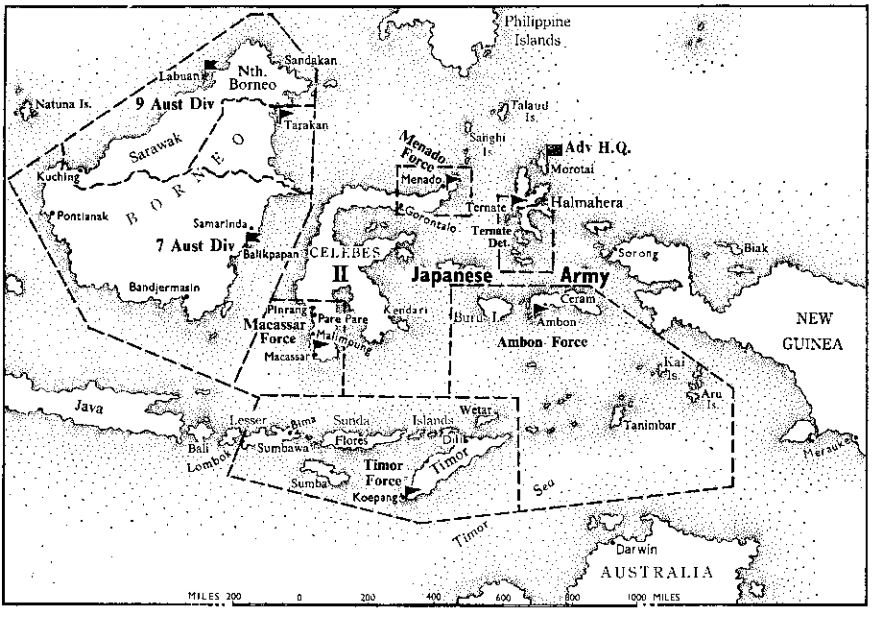
By a combination of tact and firmness the Australian commanders and their troops succeeded admirably in maintaining law and order in the eastern half of the Indies in very difficult circumstances and for a far longer period than had originally been intended, because the revolutionary struggle in Java tied up British and Indian troops who might otherwise have taken over responsibility for islands farther east.[4]

The Indonesian nationalists had the sympathy of trade unionists in Australia, and particularly of the waterside workers. In September some Indonesian seamen walked off Dutch ships that were in eastern Australian ports and bound for the Indies, and Australian wharf labourers refused

[3] War Cabinet Minute 4398, 30 Aug 1945.

[4] The experiences of the Australian forces in the Indies in this period are described in Volume VII of the Army series of this history.

to load some of these ships. Opposition members complained in Parliament that vessels carrying food and medical supplies to sick and starving people were being held up. Chifley told the House that, as a result of a conference he had had with the Dutch authorities, there would be no



interruption of the loading of ships carrying only food and medical supplies; but any ship carrying munitions would be loaded by Dutch labour.

"Is not the Netherlands Government entitled to arms and ammunition?" asked Holt. "I shall not go into that matter," replied the Prime Minister.[5]

While Australia was seeking to limit her military commitments in the Netherlands East Indies she was extending her political activities. In October, Mr Macmahon Ball,[6] appointed by the Minister for External Affairs as Australian Political Representative to the Allied Commander, Netherlands East Indies, went to Java and urged Australian interests on the British commander and expressed Australian opinions side by side with the political advisers furnished to the commander by the British Foreign Office.

It might be argued that Australia had a double interest. The carrying out of the arrangements for the relief of Australian forces in the eastern half of the Netherlands Indies was being delayed by the internal disturbances in the British area of responsibility. More importantly, the present

[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 185, pp. 6128-9.

[6] W. Macmahon Ball. Director of Short Wave Broadcasting, Dept of Information 1940-44; British Commonwealth Rep on Allied Council for Japan 1946-47; Prof of Political Science, Melbourne University 1949-68. B. Casterton, Vic, 29 Aug 1901.

and future stability of government in this region was of considerable consequence to Australian security.

In November Dr Evatt, still in London, proposed by cablegram that Australia should intervene in Indonesia and take a leading part in calling a truce and opening negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesians, as well as landing an Australian force, under South-East Asia Command, to arrange and supervise the concentration and removal of all Japanese troops and Allied prisoners of war and internees.[7]

From Canberra, however, Chifley replied that he was sure that the Cabinet would not agree to this additional commitment of forces. It would be difficult enough to keep Australians in Borneo for an extended period. Yet Australia could scarcely offer her services as a third party for mediation without accepting by implication the responsibility for enforcing the conditions under which mediation would take place or for policing any agreement that might be made. Chifley was against any initiative by Australia.[8]

In the same week (27th November) the Australian Chiefs of Staff were also considering the problem on their own account. The military information they had about the situation in mid-November was that the Japanese strength in Java was 50,000 troops of whom fewer than 1,000 had been disarmed; Indonesian troops numbered 100,000, of whom 25,000 had been trained by the Japanese, and their equipment, including 800 armoured vehicles, 200 guns, 1,000 machine-guns, 1,000 sub-machine-guns and 25,000 rifles, with plenty of ammunition, made them a force capable of conducting a prolonged guerilla fight; Allied prisoners of war and internees numbered 120,000 of whom only half were under any kind of Allied protection; the British strength was two infantry divisions and one armoured regiment, with an additional infantry division allocated but not yet in occupation. The British were in Java, acting on behalf of the United Nations in accordance with the policy agreed upon for the disarmament and concentration of Japanese forces, the recovery and repatriation of prisoners of war and internees and the maintenance of law and order.

The Australian forces, the relief of which was dependent on the capacity of the British forces to gain control of the situation in Java, consisted of two frigates and four corvettes in the Morotai area, two divisions, a brigade group and a battalion group in Borneo, south Celebes, Ambon and Timor, with advanced headquarters at Morotai; and four air force squadrons, including a transport squadron. What would happen if the internal disturbances in Java spread into the Australian area? What should be done if the situation became so grave in the British area that the British commander asked for Australian assistance or if disturbances broke out in parts of the British area where British forces were not available?

The Minister for Defence, Mr Beasley, put the possibilities raised by the Chiefs of Staff before the War Cabinet on 18th December. The War

[7] Telegrams E47 and E48 from Evatt to Chifley, 23 Nov 1945.
[8] Telegram 1802, 26 Nov 1945.

Cabinet said they were hypothetical questions and the Chiefs of Staff should submit an immediate report and recommendations when an actual situation arose. They added, however, that "on the basis of the present position the Government is opposed, in principle, to the acceptance of any additional commitments for the use of Australian forces in the Netherlands East Indies". It was the wish of the Government that the Australian forces stationed in the Netherlands East Indies should avoid, as far as possible, participation in internal strife. Their duties and responsibility as originally defined were—

(i) The carrying out of the Japanese surrender terms;
(ii) The recovery and repatriation of Allied prisoners of war and internees; and
(iii) The maintenance of law and order and the restoration of economic life to the extent only of preventing disease and unrest.[9]

A month later, in the middle of January 1946, the Chiefs of Staff reported more definitely on the prospects for the relief of Australian forces. The British were about to take over in British North Borneo and the Dutch were expected to start relieving Australian garrisons excepting in Timor, by the end of January and, with the movement of further British forces into south Celebes, the Australian "initial responsibility" would be completed about the middle of February.

At the same meeting the War Cabinet gave separate consideration to the situation in Timor and, accepting the report of the Chiefs of Staff that there was no military reason why Australian forces (comprising 400 troops and a small number of R.A.N. and R.A.A.F.) should be retained there, approved of their withdrawal.[1]

When it made these decisions the War Cabinet had before it a report, dated 17th December 1945, which Macmahon Ball had presented to the Department of External Affairs on his return to Australia from duty as Australian Political Representative in Java. The report described various elements in the situation in the Netherlands East Indies and, after discussing the chances either of an early political settlement between the Dutch and Indonesians or of the restoration of order by Allied forces, expressed the belief that "if and when the hope of a Dutch-Indonesian settlement is destroyed immediate steps should be taken to treat the N.E.I. as a problem that belongs to the United Nations, and not simply to the Netherlands and U.K." The report concluded:

> While I recognise our very vital interests in this area, I cannot see that Australia could hope to succeed in any independent initiative. First, because Australia cannot mediate unless she is accepted as a mediator by both parties, and we would have little chance of acceptance by the Dutch. Second, because even if the Dutch did accept us, for fear that worse might befall them, this would imply some obligations to back our political intervention with military force. If the impressions I gained on my flying visits to Morotai and Borneo are correct, then any Australian Government which sought to transfer our troops to Java instead of bringing them home would be faced with a major domestic crisis. I think it useless for us to give advice

[9] War Cabinet Minute 4598, 18 Dec 1945; Agendum 551/1945.
[1] War Cabinet Minutes 4607 and 4608, 19 Jan 1946; Agenda 13/1946 and 14/1946.

to Dutch or Indonesians unless we are prepared to support our words with deeds. That is why I feel that if Australia is to participate directly in the Java crisis we should do so, not as an independent nation, but as a member of the United Nations, which is specially concerned with our area of such strategic and political importance for our own future.

The War Cabinet noted the report and proceeded to consider the military proposals for the relief of the Australian forces.[2]

It would appear, however, that the decision of the War Cabinet was a decision for non-intervention and for withdrawal as quickly as possible from the risk of additional commitments in the Netherlands Indies, rather than an evaluation of the political situation in Java and a consideration of the various diplomatic courses open to Australia. Australian post-war diplomatic activity in the islands to the north might have begun at that point but in fact it did not do so. The old gap between defence and foreign policy started to open again. The pull of the old isolationism and of keeping out of other people's troubles was for the time being stronger than the ambitions to shine in world councils. The Government was demanding separate and distinctive representation in the occupation of Japan for that was a matter of national pride as one of the shapers of victory, but during the preceding months they had shunned opportunities for taking a larger part in other post-hostilities measures in either Asia or Europe.[3]

On 24th January the Prime Minister publicly announced, with gratification, the prospect of the withdrawal of all Australian forces from Borneo and the Netherlands East Indies.

The Australian forces handed over responsibility to Indian troops in Celebes in February. The Australian headquarters on Timor was closed on 19th March when a Dutch administration took over. Thereafter Australian military government was confined to Australian territories. From 30th October onwards a "provisional administration" progressively took over control of the New Guinea territories district by district, and on 24th June 1946 it took charge of the last of these—the Gazelle Peninsula—and military government in New Guinea ceased.

Meanwhile Australians had also been involved in military government in a British colony. From 1943 onwards a group in the Colonial Office in London had been planning the re-establishment of civil government in the British parts of Borneo. This group was one of several which were preparing for the administration of the civil population in territories that might be occupied by British or Allied armies in Europe, Africa or Asia. Australian interest in this British planning appears to have begun in 1943.

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[2] War Cabinet Minute 4606, 19 Jan 1946, and Agendum 2/1946.

[3] An early indication of the Chifley Government's attitude was given at a War Cabinet meeting on 19th September 1945. The Minister for External Affairs, Dr Evatt, who had only returned from the United Nations Conference on International Organisation on 23rd July had left again for London on 4th September. War Cabinet decided to send a cablegram to him asking that the Government be kept informed of his activities and telling him "that the Government does not wish to be involved in controversial matters relating to Europe which do not affect Australia's vital interests". (War Cabinet Minute 4452, 19 Sep 1945.) It was the drive of Dr Evatt rather than any immediate change in the outlook of the Labour Government that brought increased participation by Australia in world affairs.

In July of that year, on the recommendation of the Minister for External Territories, Senator Fraser, a committee was established to plan the rehabilitation of Australian territories. G. W. Paton,[4] professor of law at Melbourne University, was appointed chairman, and he was sent abroad with Major N. Penglase, of Angau, to study British and American doctrines of military government. They visited the Army and Navy Schools of Military Government in the United States, did a course at the Civil Affairs Staff Centre in England and talked to the relevant authorities in London. When Paton presented his report in January 1944 General Blamey protested that he should have been consulted before the recommendations went to the Cabinet: for a considerable time control of the New Guinea territories must remain with the army and he had a Directorate of Research, one of whose tasks was to advise him on administration in occupied or re-occupied territories.

To the Army Directorate of Research had very recently been added a number of lawyers, anthropologists and economists, evidently with the object of lending weight to the advice being offered to the Commander-in-Chief on the administration of the territories; and a school of civil administration was being planned.[5]

While in London with Curtin in 1944 Blamey had talks with the permanent heads of the War Office and the Colonial Office about plans for civil administration in Borneo.

In December 1944 a War Office liaison officer on Civil Affairs reached Melbourne, and in the first quarter of 1945 a Civil Affairs Unit for Borneo arrived, commanded by Brigadier C. F. C. Macaskie, Chief Justice and Deputy Governor of North Borneo. By this time a civil affairs unit—British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit—with an establishment differing from the British one was being organised in Australia by Blamey's Director of Research and Civil Affairs. The British unit now became a holding centre from which its members were gradually transferred to the Australian unit.

On 23rd May the Minister for Defence asked for information about the new Australian unit, and this Blamey provided. On the 28th the War Cabinet approved the formation of the unit, expressed the opinion that it should have been consulted sooner, and stated that the United Kingdom should be asked to replace Australian members of the unit as soon as possible. On 22nd July Macaskie took command of B.B.C.A.U. in Borneo, about six weeks after it had begun operations there.[6]

[4] Sir George Paton. Prof of Jurisprudence, University of Melbourne 1931-51, Vice-Chancellor 1951-68. B. Geelong, Vic, 16 Aug 1902.

[5] The LHQ School of Civil Affairs was established in November and December 1944 with Colonel J. K. Murray, a professor of agriculture, at the head of a staff of seven which, initially, included three university anthropologists.

[6] Even so the Chief Civil Affairs Officer "found that he was allowed little say in controlling the operations of the unit: as an example it may be recorded that appointments to specific posts in the unit were made, not by the C.C.A.O., but by the Director of Research and Civil Affairs 4,000 miles away in Melbourne, without experience of civil or military administration. To this may be ascribed the occasional subordination of experienced civil administrators to young officers lacking any experience of either civil administration or military staff work. Even if the earlier exclusion of the C.C.A.O. from command of the unit was desirable in the interests of integration and flexibility, this later tight subordination to the Director of Research and Civil Affairs prevented any elasticity and sealed off all local knowledge and experience." F. S. V. Donnison, *British Military Administration in the Far East 1943-46* (1956), p. 182.

It was unfortunate that the Ministers did not receive information about the development of these units far sooner, particularly in view of the political factors that were involved.

When in January Borneo was transferred from Australian to British command B.B.C.A.U. ceased to exist and was replaced by "British Military Administration", 57 of whose 144 officers were Australians who volunteered to continue. In recognition of the work done by the Australian Army in the rehabilitation of British Borneo the insignia of the 9th Australian Division was included in the coat of arms of the new Colony of British Borneo which was established on 15th July 1946.[7]

The initiative in regard to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan came from London. Before the termination of hostilities the United Kingdom had proposed the formation of a British Commonwealth Force to take part in the operations against the main islands of Japan. The Australian response was to agree to such a force provided that satisfactory assurances were given that Australia would have a voice in the policy relating to the control and use of Australian forces. Australia also wanted to know what principles would be followed in selecting the commanders of such a force and pressed the claims of Australian officers to consideration. The end of the war came before any further progress had been made in the discussion of an operational force, but on 13th August the United Kingdom suggested that a British Commonwealth Force be formed from Australian, British, British-Indian, Canadian and New Zealand troops to take part in the occupation of Japan and that Australia might contribute to the forces to be sent to Hong Kong.[8]

The War Cabinet rejected the request to provide forces for the occupation of Hong Kong, although willing to make available some minesweepers for a stipulated period of "two months only". In proposing to send to Japan a Task Force of two cruisers and two destroyers, two brigade groups and three fighter squadrons the Government told the United Kingdom: "We must insist, however, that this contribution is being made by Australia as a separate belligerent of Japan, and that our Force will operate under an Australian Commander who will be subject only to the Supreme Allied Commander."

It was at the same time that Australia agreed to a United Kingdom proposal that the South-West Pacific Area should pass to the British and Australian Command, the division of responsibility between them to be considered later. As mentioned earlier, the Government also accepted the suggestion in respect of Borneo and the islands to the east, including Ocean Island and Nauru, it being understood that the United Kingdom would make shipping available.

In view of the part played by the 8th Division in Malaya, Australia asked that the Australian parachute battalion might participate in the

[7] The formation and experiences of BBCAU are described in Volume VII of the Army series of this history.

[8] Telegram 290 from Dominions Office, 13 Aug 1945.

re-occupation of Singapore, and urged that "the highest priority in every respect, including sea, land and air transport" should be given to ensure the safe return of prisoners of war.[9] In making these contributions Australia insisted that it was doing so not as a subsidiary but as a principal Pacific power which had fought Japan.[1]

When the Australian Government informed the United Kingdom that its force to go to Japan should operate under an Australian commander who would be subject only to the Supreme Allied Commander,[2] the British Government replied expressing the view that the general interests of the British Commonwealth would best be served by a single force rather than by separate forces. A joint force would "afford a valuable demonstration of our essential unity in matters of common concern and a good augury for our future close cooperation in defence matters". Moreover, the single commander of a joint force would carry more weight than two commanders of lower rank in command of smaller forces acting independently. If Australia would agree, then Britain would welcome the appointment of an Australian officer as Commander-in-Chief of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. These proposals referred solely to the military aspect of the occupation of Japan and any political aspects must be the subject of separate treatment.[3]

Chifley replied rejecting the offer and again asking for an independent Australian force. Australia felt strongly, he said, that, in the military as well as the political tasks and responsibilities arising from the Japanese surrender, Australia was entitled to "a degree of recognition and status that is fairly and justly commensurate with the contribution which we have made to the final victory over Japan". Australia accepted the commitments to provide an occupation force for Japan "as a separate belligerent of Japan, and as a primary, and not as a secondary, Pacific power. We consider that the Australian Force to serve in Japan should operate on the same basis as our Forces have operated in the South-West Pacific Area in the past, that is with direct responsibility to General MacArthur. . . . We have informed General MacArthur of our desire to organise an independent Australian Force to serve in Japan and, although no final arrangements have yet been made, we have no doubt that General MacArthur will cooperate fully with us in allotting to the Australian Force a role appropriate to our status and the contribution which we have made to the victory in the Pacific."[4]

While Canberra insisted on an independent force, however, Dr Evatt, then in London, was induced by Australian advisers to look at the British proposal as the recognition and not as the denial of the Australian claims to take a primary part in Pacific affairs. In a telegram to Canberra, while agreeing with the general principles of Chifley's reply, he suggested that

[9] In the event only part of the parachute battalion went to Malaya where it performed police duties until January 1946.
[1] War Cabinet Minute 4350, 17 Aug; Agendum 379/1945.
[2] Telegram 240 to Dominions Office, 17 Aug 1945.
[3] Telegram 349 from Dominions Office, 1 Sep 1945.
[4] Telegram 286 to Dominions Office, 10 Sep 1945.

the British proposal might be looked at again. Providing that executive authority over the force was exercised from Australia and that the Australian Government nominated the commander, it might be possible to use the occasion to demonstrate "Australian leadership in Pacific affairs and in the Pacific settlement". He suggested that the Australian decision be reviewed to see if it were possible to amend the British proposal to ensure "acknowledged and effective control of the enterprise and at the same time direct responsibility to General MacArthur".[5]

Consequently, on 19th September, the War Cabinet decided that Australia should contribute to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force on the assumption that an Australian officer was the Inter-Service Commander-in-Chief and the bulk of the headquarters was provided by Australia; the Force Commander would be under the control and have direct access to the Supreme Allied Commander. On policy and administrative matters the Commander-in-Chief would be jointly responsible to the United Kingdom and Australian Governments through the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Australia, comprising the Australian Chiefs of Staff and a representative or representatives of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff. All instructions to the Commander-in-Chief would be issued by the Australian Chiefs of Staff as the agents of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Australia. A directive to the Commander-in-Chief would be drawn up by consultation between the Governments concerned.[6]

The United Kingdom Government agreed with the proposals[7] and after various administrative arrangements had been discussed and interpreted to mutual satisfaction[8] they were communicated to the United States Government. While the United States accepted the principle of a British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, some difficulty arose over American views that the British Commonwealth Forces should be integrated with the Allied forces, and consequently the Commonwealth army and air forces would be placed under the American army and air commanders. The difficulties were discussed in Washington and in Tokyo and a satisfactory arrangement reached.[9]

Finally only one Australian brigade was included in B.C.O.F. It was formed in the last part of 1945 and the first troops arrived in Japan in February 1946. The Australian air force component—a wing of three fighter squadrons plus an airfield construction squadron—began to arrive in March. The Australian army and air force components at the outset included about 12,000 officers and men, which was about one-third of the strength of the whole force. The original commander was Lieut-General Northcott who remained in command until June 1946 when he was appointed Governor of New South Wales—the first Australian to hold that office—and was succeeded by Lieut-General H. C. H. Robertson.

Control of the force by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Australia

[5] Telegram EC.10 from Evatt to Chifley, 14 Sep 1945.
[6] War Cabinet Minute 4400, 19 Sep 1945.
[7] Telegram 396 from Dominions Office, 1 Oct 1945.
[8] War Cabinet Minute 4482, 4 Oct, and Agendum 426/1945, Supplement No. 1.
[9] War Cabinet Minute 4595, 18 Dec 1945; Agendum 550/1945 and Supplement No. 1.

(J.C.O.S.A.) was continued until the end of 1947 when the three governments still contributing to the force—Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand—agreed that J.C.O.S.A. should be abolished and responsibility for the control and administration of the force assigned to the Australian Government. In a statement made on 14th July 1948, Dedman, as Minister for Defence, said that the then organisation for the control of B.C.O.F. had great significance on three separate counts:

It is (he said) the first practical example of an assignment of forces by several Commonwealth governments to the control of one government under the new machinery, which provides formal and adequate arrangements for retention by the participating governments of sovereign control of their own policy and full consultation when their interests are affected.

It is the first time that forces of the United Kingdom have been placed under the control of a Dominion government and thus constitutes the most complete expression to date in the Defence sphere of the principle of the "sovereign equality" of all Commonwealth members, which was enunciated at the Imperial Conference of 1926.

It represents a recognition of the special position of Australia in Pacific affairs and her willingness and ability to carry increased responsibilities for British Commonwealth defence in this area.

The force's military tasks in its area, initially the prefecture of Hiroshima but later enlarged by the addition of other prefectures, were military control, protection of Allied installations and demilitarisation and disposal of Japanese installations and armaments. In two years and a half the force destroyed hundreds of thousands of tons of military equipment. In 1947 the Indian contingent was withdrawn and the United Kingdom and New Zealand contingents greatly reduced. By 1950 when the Korean war broke out the only combat unit remaining was a squadron of the R.A.A.F.

4—DEMOBILISATION

At a meeting on 12th June 1944 the War Cabinet had approved recommendations by the Department of Post-War Reconstruction regarding the general principles to govern demobilisation. These provided that the selection of members of the forces for dispersal should be made on a system of individual priorities determined at the cessation of hostilities by allotting points for length of service together with age at enlistment and marital status.

Discharges should be in advance of normal priority in the case of members whose services were required on occupational grounds in the national interest; members accepted for full-time training courses as determined by the appropriate authority; the medically unfit; compassionate cases; other cases in which circumstances would have justified discharge during hostilities.

Discharge should be deferred in the case of members whose continued employment was essential; members who volunteered to forego priority and whose continued employment was desirable.

Demobilisation plans should provide for a rate of dispersal of 3,000 a day six days a week, and be capable of expansion to meet emergencies.

There should be dispersal areas in each State, the selection of sites, provision of accommodation etc. to be carried out immediately.

The services and the appropriate Commonwealth civil departments should now plan and develop flexible administrative machinery for dispersal in such a way that it will be immediately available when required. Any policy or procedure which it is decided to adopt for the demobilisation period should be introduced as soon as possible, provided that this is practicable during the war.[1]

After consultation with organisations representing trade unions, employers and returned servicemen, an extensive "Outline Plan for Demobilisation of the Australian Defence Forces" was drawn up by an Inter-Service Demobilisation Committee and endorsed by a Reconstruction Demobilisation Committee. This plan was eventually discussed by the War Cabinet on 6th March 1945 and accepted as a basis for planning. The Reconstruction Demobilisation Committee was designated the demobilisation authority.[2] The War Cabinet also directed that a Parliamentary Paper should be prepared on the subject; this was not completed until after the cessation of hostilities, but the progress made was such that, on the day after the capitulation of Japan, the War Cabinet was able to put into train an orderly procedure for demobilisation.[3]

In July War Cabinet had approved an expenditure of £250,000 for the provision in each State of an appropriate demobilisation dispersal centre.[4]

A revised procedure for rehabilitation of discharged troops had come into operation on 8th November 1943. Briefly it provided that a rehabilitation officer would interview each person about to be discharged and complete his rehabilitation form. The person and the form would then pass on to an employment section of the Manpower Directorate established at each General Details Depot which would be responsible for placing the person in employment, for civil registration and for the issue of identity cards and issue of civilian ration entitlements.

At the beginning of August some 20,100 Australian servicemen were serving outside the South-West Pacific, three-quarters being members of the air force, and 224,000 were serving outside Australia in the S.W.P.A. There were 310,600 in Australia. In the three services were 43,600 women, all but some 1,800 within Australia. Thus the total number who had to be reabsorbed was 598,300.

Under the points system by which discharges were now governed, two points were awarded for each completed year of age at enlistment, two points were added for each month of service, and men with dependants received an additional point for each month of service. In accordance with the War Cabinet's decision members whose early return to civilian life was considered essential and members whose discharge on compassionate grounds had been approved were to be given a special priority, but

[1] War Cabinet Minute 3607, 12 Jun 1944.
[2] War Cabinet Minute 4077, 6 Mar 1945, on Agendum 77/1945.
[3] Report tabled by Minister for Defence (Mr Dedman) on 25 Mar 1947, "Demobilisation of the Australian Defence Forces, 1945-47" (not printed).
[4] War Cabinet Minute 4346, 24 Jul 1945; Agendum 318/1945.

members whose continued services were essential could be retained regardless of priority.

In the army, for example, on 1st June 1945 the length of service of members was:

Over five years . .	25,455
Four to five . . .	68,903
Three to four . . .	193,129
Two to three . . .	51,243
One to two . . .	10,910
Less than one . . .	9,875
Total . . .	359,515[5]

Of these 214,886 had served abroad.

Although long-service men, former prisoners and others continued to be discharged in August and September—26,167 men and women were released between 15th August and 30th September—general demobilisation in accordance with a comprehensive plan presented to Parliament on 29th August did not begin until 1st October. Dispersal centres shared by the three services had been established by then in each capital city and staffed both by service people and people from civil departments concerned with the re-establishment of service personnel. At each centre the person being discharged was given information about employment, land settlement, housing, reconstruction training, re-establishment loans, tools of trade and other available benefits.

The plan provided that while service arrangements for discharge were being completed members might be allowed to live at home on leave until recalled for final discharge. During this leave they might take a job. When finally discharged, members would be given a minimum period of leave with pay of 30 days for those with more than six months' service and 15 days for those with less.

The general demobilisation was carried out in four stages, the last ending on 15th February 1947, when the services had been reduced to an "interim" strength of 60,133.

The number to be discharged in each stage was decided by the Cabinet. The responsibility for carrying out the decisions rested on the Demobilisation Committee. Thus on 19th September the War Cabinet decided that in the first stage, to begin not later than 1st October and to be completed during January, 10,000 were to be discharged by the Navy, 135,000 by the Army, and 55,000 by the Air Force. In fact a total of 249,159 were discharged by 31st January.

By the end of December 76,000 service men and women had been brought back from the islands, largely by aircraft, by British aircraft carriers and landing ships, and the converted liners *Manoora*, *Kanimbla* and *Westralia*. It was expected that all troops overseas who were not needed for garrison duties would have reached the mainland by the end of March.

Already in November the Cabinet considered that the problem it faced

[5] Central Army Records Office: Compendium of Information.

concerning the men still serving in the islands was not that of transporting them home but providing men to relieve them, and on 21st November the Full Cabinet decided that 10,000 men in training camps in Australia should be sent to the islands to relieve a similar number of long-service men. At the same meeting the Minister was authorised to call for volunteers for garrison work in the islands from men then serving and from civilians.

The three services had still many tasks in addition to that of moving men to dispersal centres and arranging their discharge. As mentioned, naval and air force units were busy transporting men home. There were mines to be swept, stores to be assembled and moved, Japanese, who greatly outnumbered the Australian troops in their areas, to be disarmed and supervised, and normal day-by-day duties to be done.

By the end of the year the Navy, for example, was 35,000 strong, including 1,700 in discharge depots; 4,600 had been discharged. The Australian Squadron (one cruiser and a destroyer) was in Japanese waters. As mentioned, three converted liners were engaged carrying troops back to the mainland. A minesweeping flotilla was sweeping off the east coast. Another such flotilla had completed its task at Hong Kong. Four destroyers and a number of frigates and corvettes were engaged on surveillance in waters north of Australia. Since 1st July a cruiser, a destroyer, 6 corvettes and 180 smaller vessels had been paid off; but in December three new frigates were commissioned. The defensively-armed merchant ships had been disarmed. The Army by the end of the year had closed the headquarters of the I and II Corps and of two divisions, but had formed a new 34th Brigade Group in Japan. In November it had reported that 255,958 Japanese troops and 67,323 civilians, Formosans and Koreans had surrendered in the areas it controlled, and that 244,546 of the combatants had been disarmed. Some Japanese were allowed to retain a few weapons for self-protection in areas of the Indies where they were only indirectly controlled by the Australian Army. The Army still contained 255,200 men and 17,500 women. It had discharged 93,600 men on points, 9,800 former prisoners, and 76,400 who had been released to industry.

The Air Force had disbanded 73 units between 19th October and 31st December, including seven squadrons. In December 20 units including 10 squadrons had been moved from Morotai, Labuan or Tarakan to Australian bases. The force contained 105,500 men and 11,300 women, including 35,600 awaiting finalisation of discharge. Aircraft were still being delivered to meet outstanding orders: 8 Mustangs, 3 Beaufighters, 6 Mosquitos and 4 Wirraways in December. The existing strength was some 4,800 aircraft of all types, including trainers. There were 247 Liberators, 107 Dakotas, 108 Catalinas, 376 Beauforts, 313 Beaufighters, 320 Mustangs, 173 Mosquitos, 364 Spitfires.

In the second stage of demobilisation the Government ordered that another 200,000 should be discharged by 30th June. Only 193,461 were discharged by that date, but the deficiency was made up in the next week.

Thus in 10 months and a half after the cease-fire 468,700, or 80 per cent of the total, were dispersed.

The Government decided that the third stage would extend to 31st December, when the three services were to have been reduced to the strengths considered necessary to carry out their remaining tasks. These were: Navy, 13,500; Army, 50,000; Air Force, 15,000; total, 78,500. In the event, the Air Force made the required reductions by August, the Navy by November and the Army in the first week of December. At this stage the "interim" forces (to be replaced eventually by post-war forces when post-war defence measures had been decided) still contained many who had not volunteered to soldier on. The Minister for the Army directed that all who had not volunteered were to be discharged by 1st February 1946, except for essential medical and dental staffs.

The Navy and Air Force were not given similar directions but their policy was to release all who wished to go as soon as possible.

In this fourth stage 16,705 were discharged and the strength of the three services fell to some 60,000, all volunteers except for a few key personnel in the Navy and Air Force and a small number of medical and dental people needed by the Army until the Repatriation Commission took over responsibility for providing medical attention for repatriation patients. The services thus fell short of the final strength thought necessary in the first half of 1946, but their tasks also had been much reduced. By June 1946 all but a few Japanese prisoners had embarked for home, Australian military responsibilities in the Indies had ended, and military government in every part of New Guinea had ceased.

The manner in which the Army dwindled in 1945 and 1946 is shown in the accompanying table.

Strength of the Army

1945	Men	Women
End of September	355,409	22,189
October	332,739	21,079
November	288,663	18,966
December	237,246	16,970
1946		
End of March	140,445	11,697
June	89,666	7,994
September	61,903	4,669
December	43,905	3,046

At the end of September 1945 there had been 286,000 men in the A.I.F., 69,044 in the militia and 365 in the V.D.C. on full-time duty. There were 2,517 in the A.A.N.S., 4,945 in the A.A.M.W.S. and 14,727 in the A.W.A.S.

A final report on demobilisation made by the Department of Post-War Reconstruction proudly claimed that

> while, as is inevitable in a scheme of this magnitude, a few individuals considered that their demobilisation had been unduly delayed, it was generally conceded by both the Opposition and the press that Australia's Defence Forces had been

demobilised quickly and efficiently, and it is now known that the rate of demobilisation achieved in Australia compares more than favourably with that of any other of the Allied countries.

In July 1945 proposals for the recovery and reception of Australian prisoners of war in South-East Asia had been submitted to War Cabinet, but an immediate decision was not taken. On 18th August, however, the War Cabinet approved the recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief for the immediate despatch of a Prisoner of War Reception Group then being formed.[6]

Detailed planning of the recovery of prisoners of war in the Far East had begun in London in 1944. In Australia the formation of the 2nd Australian Prisoner of War Reception Group had been begun in July (the first such group was in England, concerned with caring for former prisoners of the Germans). This group established itself at Singapore, and the 3rd Prisoner of War Reception Group, formed in August, was based on Manila, where it became the principal receiving depot for all Commonwealth prisoners (except Canadians) recovered from Formosa, Japan and Korea. By the end of September most of the prisoners recovered in Singapore, Java and Sumatra had been taken to Australia and half the prisoners from the Bangkok area had been evacuated or were staging through Singapore. Lack of transport caused delay to the repatriation of prisoners from Manila, and by the end of September fewer than 400 Australians had embarked from that port. On the 4th, however, 1,500 were taken aboard the British aircraft carriers *Formidable* and *Speaker*, and in the next 12 days practically all the Australians were on their way home. Of the Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen take by the Japanese 14,345 were recovered or escaped and 8,031 died in captivity.[7]

While the troops were returning to Australia, many of those from England bringing recently acquired wives with them, Australian wives of American servicemen were preparing to go to the United States. Replying to a question in Parliament in August 1945 Chifley said that about 2,000 Australian wives of American servicemen had obtained visas and were awaiting transport to America, between 1,500 and 2,000 had completed visa arrangements or were expected to do so in the next few months, and the American Consulate-General at Sydney considered that there remained in Australia from 8,000 to 8,500 wives and fiancées who would ultimately want to go to the United States.[8]

MacArthur announced on 28th August that from 2nd September the South-West Pacific Command would cease to exist. Thereupon the War Cabinet, advised by the Advisory War Council, approved that from

[6] War Cabinet Minutes 4295 of 11 Jul and 4386 of 18 Aug 1945; Agendum 304/1945 and Supplement No. 1.

[7] A more detailed account of the recovery of the prisoners of the Japanese, and of their experiences in captivity, is given in Volume IV of the Army series of this history, and in Volume III of the Medical series.

[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 184, pp. 5000-1.

midday on 2nd September the Australian naval forces assigned to the S.W.P.A. would revert to the Naval Board, the military forces to the Commander-in-Chief, Blamey, and the air forces to the Air Board.[9]

On 15th September Blamey, after reporting to Forde that he had been present at the surrender in Tokyo Bay a week before, advised that there was no longer any need for the exercise of his powers as Commander-in-Chief. The remaining tasks could be carried out under government supervision "by the machinery of corporate control". He wished to lay down his office as soon as possible to facilitate this transition and would appreciate an indication as to when this would be acceptable.

It was not until 15th November that Forde informed Blamey that the Government had decided soon to re-introduce control of the Army by the Military Board, and that General Sturdee would act as Commander-in-Chief from 1st December until the Military Board was formed (on 1st March as it turned out). Thus at a fortnight's notice the service of the man who during six years had commanded first the A.I.F. in the Middle East and then the whole army in the South-West Pacific was terminated. After further discussion it was agreed that Blamey should complete his dispatches in a period to be added to his accumulated leave and that this task would be finished by 31st January.[1]

On 18th December the War Cabinet met and decided that its next meeting would be its last. It had before it at the meeting on the 18th a memorandum by Shedden on "Cooperation in Empire Defence". This described the development of doctrines of Empire defence at the Imperial Conferences of 1923, 1926 and 1937; Australian pre-war defence policy; some wartime defence developments in Australia, particularly in relation to supply; the Australian proposals of 1944 for improved machinery for Empire cooperation.

Finally it mentioned changes in the Australian higher defence organisation "to ensure its adequacy to deal with the problems associated with the development of an effective Post-War Defence Policy and the study and development of its relation to cooperation within the British Commonwealth and World Security Organisation". Shedden recalled the Prime Minister's statement in March 1945 that the security of Australia or any other part of the British Commonwealth would rest on three safeguards "each wider in its scope than the other": the system of collective security, Empire cooperation, and national defence.

Shedden continued that direct communication had been authorised between the Secretary of the Department of Defence and the senior service member of the Accredited Government Representative and also with the Secretariat of the United Kingdom War Cabinet. This enabled information to be exchanged but without committing the governments concerned. The Australian-New Zealand Agreement provided for cooperation between those dominions in defence matters of mutual interest. The memorandum then

[9] War Cabinet Minute 4399, 30 Aug 1945.

[1] For further details of Blamey's treatment by the Chifley Government see Vol VII in the Army series, and J. Hetherington, *Blamey* (1954).

listed the departments concerned in the various principles laid down in the papers.

The War Cabinet decided that the memorandum should be circulated to the departments concerned, that all specific proposals relating to Empire cooperation in post-war defence policy should be subject to approval by the Government, and, before being considered by the Government, all such proposals should be reviewed by "the appropriate Higher Defence Machinery, from the Defence aspect", and that where consultation with the United Kingdom Government was necessary proposals involving defence cooperation should be referred to the Resident Minister in London for action.[2]

At the same meeting the War Cabinet decided to re-establish the Council of Defence to advise on defence policy or organisation. The Council, which consisted of a selected group of Ministers, the Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of the Defence Department, had, in accordance with pre-war plans, been replaced at the outbreak of war by the War Cabinet.

The War Cabinet then endorsed views on departmental organisation expressed by the Minister for Defence after consultation with the Prime Minister.[3] The Minister said that it was desirable, from a short-term aspect, to maintain the present set-up of a Defence Department responsible for defence policy and the joint-service machinery, and also service and supply departments responsible in their separate spheres of administration within the defined defence policy. The Defence Department was faced with considerable problems of post-war policy and joint-service organisation in addition to policy matters relating to the occupation force in Japan; the service departments were confronted with demobilisation and the organisation of post-war forces, and the group of supply departments each had parallel problems of contraction, disposal and post-war organisation.

The Prime Minister, he added, considered that when the departments had reached their ultimate post-war footing the matter might have to be reviewed. The Defence Department's view, shared by the highest service opinion, was that war-time experience had indicated a definite trend towards the closer relation of the services through joint-service departmental machinery which had its counterpart in the operational sphere in the appointment of Commanders-in-Chief commanding naval, land and air forces, and functioning with joint-staffs of the three services. The closer integration of the three services and their unified command and employment had involved a new conception of cooperation and strategical employment. Another important feature had been the development of machinery to provide a link between the commander of unified forces and the Government.

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[2] War Cabinet Minute 4591, 18 Dec 1945.
[3] War Cabinet Minute 4594, 18 Dec 1945.

On 8th September Attlee informed Chifley that Britain was anxious to economise in shipping and reduce the length of time taken to send supplies to the British Pacific Fleet, and proposed to move its base and supply organisations from Australia to Singapore and Hong Kong as soon as possible. A complete revision of the naval works programme in Australia was called for. He expressed gratitude for all that Australia had done. "We have always been mindful of your contribution to the common effort and the resulting pressure on your own resources. If you may sometimes have thought that this was not so, the root cause must, I think, lie in the necessity which we have felt of stating our needs in full so as to discover how much you could undertake in order that we might plan our manpower accordingly. If, in this way, we have unwittingly given cause for misunderstanding, we are the first to regret it and I trust that this telegram will remove it."[4]

It remained to reach a settlement with the British Government for works carried out in Australia for the Admiralty. The total estimated cost of work on fleet bases in Australia for the Royal Navy was £5,642,000. These works embraced works at Cockburn Sound and Fremantle, Western Australia, and Sydney; storage accommodation at 15 places; repair base facilities; and oil storage facilities at 14 places. An agreement approved by the Treasurer and reported to the War Cabinet on 18th December provided that the British Government would pay the full cost of the "separate R.N. projects" at Cockburn Sound, Fremantle and Sydney and of repair base facilities, 50 per cent of the cost of oil storage works and 60 per cent of the cost of the other storage accommodation. The net payment by the British Government was to be £3,000,000, the title in fixed capital assets remaining with the Commonwealth.[5]

In addition to these works on fleet bases, aerodromes, camps, stores, berthing and repair facilities and offices had been constructed far and wide for the British Pacific Fleet by the Allied Works Council. The estimated total cost of these was £5,400,000. Agreement was reached that the British Government would pay £4,250,000 "leaving £1,150,000 as the residual value of the assets which will become the property of the Commonwealth". This was made subject to the provision that should any major variation be revealed when the final estimates had been prepared the United Kingdom contribution should be varied proportionately. The War Cabinet was informed that

> the property in some of the assets is substantial both for their intrinsic value in cases such as office and storage accommodation, and their worth in cases such as aerodromes, hangars, buildings and runways as an insurance by reason of their capacity for use and extension in the event of a future war. Many of them, however, would have little or no remaining value and indeed would be the subject of a set-off for the expense incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom in restoring the sites on which the works had been erected.[6]

[4] Dominions Office cables 364 and 365 of 8 Sep 1945.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 4575, 18 Dec 1945.
[6] War Cabinet Minute 4576, 18 Dec 1945.

The Disposals Commission continued to operate until 31st July 1949 when its remaining tasks were taken over by the Department of Supply and Development. In five years the commission realised £135,189,000. Its sales included 124,000 motor vehicles, thousands of army tractors, whole camps that were used to ease the shortage of houses, large quantities of textiles and clothing, factories, machine tools (to the value of £9,217,000), aircraft, ships and small craft. Some 670,000 garments and blankets were given to charitable institutions. The goods to be disposed of were as far afield as Borneo and Morotai, where sales totalled £6,735,000.

An agreement with the United States on the settlement of Lend-Lease, reciprocal aid and surplus war property and claims was signed on 7th June 1946. This provided that neither government would pay for Lend-Lease and reciprocal aid goods and services supplied up to 2nd September 1945; that the United States would complete the transfer to Australia of goods selected by Australia from those in course of being procured on VJ-day, and Australia agreed to make no charge for goods transferred to the American forces between 2nd September and 31st December 1945; Australia agreed to pay 27,000,000 dollars (American) in consideration of the post-war value of Lend-Lease machine tools, the post-war value of other Lend-Lease capital equipment, and the transfer of American surplus property valued at 6,500,000 dollars. Already 20,000,000 dollars had been paid by Australia. The remaining 7,000,000 dollars was to be paid by the delivery to the United States Government of real property and improvement of real property to a value not exceeding 2,000,000 dollars and by the establishment of a fund in Australian pounds to be spent by the United States on educational and cultural programmes of mutual benefit.

In Parliament on 12th July 1946 the Treasurer said that the total value of Lend-Lease received by Australia was about 1,500,000,000 dollars (about £A466,000,000) while reciprocal Lend-Lease from Australia to the United States totalled about £A285,000,000.

Under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme ex-service men and women were accepted for university, technical and rural training until 30th June 1950. Full-time trainees were given allowances, ranging from £4.10.0 a week for a single man to £6.10.0 a week for a married man with dependants, tuition fees were paid and there were allowances for books, instruments, fares and, perhaps, for living away from home.[7] (The average basic wage for six capital cities in May 1946 was £4.17.0; by November 1951 it was £10.) Fees and expenses up to a limit of £60 were paid to members accepted for part-time training.

By 1951, 334,269 people had been accepted for training, 94,448 had completed training and 39,762 were still in training. Those who had

[7] The payment of the living allowance was limited to three years. People attempting a degree requiring more than three years to complete were lent the living allowance for the additional years and had to repay it.

completed courses included 12,177 full-time and 4,983 part-time university men and women. Some 64,000 withdrew before beginning their courses, evidently having found congenial jobs. About 135,000 withdrew after beginning training, the great majority being part-time technical trainees many of whom had overstated their need for training in the first place.

The War Service Homes legislation provided that a loan or advance might be made to ex-servicemen or their female dependants for the purpose of acquiring a home. The maximum loan that might be granted for building a house was £2,750 and periods of repayment up to 45 years might be approved.

War gratuity was paid to members of the forces at the rate, mentioned earlier, of £3.15.0 a month of overseas service and of certain subsequent periods in Australia and at the rate of 15s. a month of service in Australia after 6th December 1941. New Guinea, Papua and Norfolk Island were regarded as being "overseas" after 6th December 1941. Payment of the overseas rate was subject to the member's having served continuously overseas for at least 90 days or an aggregate of 180 days in twelve months, and for 90 days after the return of a member to Australia. If a member was invalided home to Australia the time spent in hospital and convalescence was included with the period of overseas service. All who had served the qualifying period were paid a minimum of 12 months' gratuity at the overseas rate. Payment for service in Australia was subject to a qualifying period of six months' service. If a member had died on service at home or abroad and his family was totally dependent on him the minimum payment was equivalent to that for three years' overseas service. In other cases of death on service gratuity at the rate accruing at the time death was notified was continued for a further seven months, and thus the minimum payment when a member died overseas was for a year and seven months.

Qualifying service was considered to have ceased on discharge or on 30th June 1947 if the member was still serving. Most of the payments were made on 3rd March 1951, but in some circumstances were made earlier. Compound interest at the rate of 3¼ per cent on the yearly credit balance was added. In the year 1950-51 £61,447,000 was paid out.

Thus wartime experience recedes in a multitude of post-war tasks. It was not all a matter of tidying up a mess. Some of it was the beginning of living in peacetime. This brief recital of seemingly disconnected events in demobilisation has been written so as to cease indeterminately and thus to emphasise once again the continuity of Australian history. The surrender did not rule a line across the book but only started a new page.

EPILOGUE

AUSTRALIA had been at war for nearly six years, over two years longer than the United States of America, a year and a half longer than the Soviet Union. At a time when those who stood firm were few in number, she had shared in the successive crises of the fall of France, the Battle for Britain, the over-running of the Balkans, and the threat in North Africa. Then, after attack on them by the enemy had brought two powerful Allies into the war, the Soviet Union against Germany and the United States against both Japan and Germany, Australia had seen the rapid Japanese southward advance, the fall of Singapore, the total loss in the Battle of the Java Sea, the occupation of the Netherlands Indies, the surrender of the Philippines, the invasion of New Guinea, and the bombing of the Australian mainland and (for a time) had awaited invasion with no Allied strength left within thousands of miles.

Before reinforcements came, Australians in New Guinea stood alone as Australia mobilised her resources for a total war effort. Then came the Battle of the Coral Sea, which turned back Japan's attempt to invade Port Moresby. The coming of reinforcements (A.I.F. divisions from the Middle East and American ground and air forces) then turned the tide. Australian troops at Milne Bay inflicted on the Japanese the first defeat they had suffered on land. For 18 months the brunt of the fighting on the New Guinea mainland continued to be borne by Australians. Then the war drew away as the American effort gained in strength and impetus.

While fighting had intensified near to Australia and in Australian territory and the prospect of invasion was still present, other Australians were helping to win the victory at Alamein; her airmen were taking part in the strikes against Germany, her sailors were serving in the Mediterranean.

Some understanding of the extent of the contribution made by Australia to the winning of the war may be gained from the fact that about 550,000 service men and women—one in twelve of her population of approximately 7,000,000—served outside Australia in one or other of the forces during the war. Casualties in operational areas were 30,508 killed and 58,351 wounded. Mainly as a result of the defeats in Greece and Crete and the fall of Singapore 30,560 Australian men and women were taken prisoner. The killed and wounded among this group are included in the figures given above. The graves of the Australian fallen were in Europe, the Middle East, in southern Asia and in New Guinea. Australians had served in Arctic seas bringing supplies to Russia through Archangel, in keeping the sea lanes free in the North Atlantic, in supplying beleaguered Malta. Australia had been a fighting ally.

Towards the end of the war the Australian role had developed into that of a major supplier of foodstuffs, materials and manufactured products in the Pacific region in support of the growing Allied forces, chiefly American, which were being assembled for the defeat of Japan. The rising demand for supplies and the maintenance of her own armed forces stretched

national resources to the point where manpower allocation became the major problem of the Australian Government in making those decisions which were left for it to make on the conduct of the war. There was growing uneasiness and some vehement objection in some quarters lest Australia should end the war not as a fighting ally but as a general providore. To some—particularly those in combat divisions—it was objectionable that Australian men should be pulled out of the forces into industry in order to produce the supplies for other Allied forces. Were the finest fighting men in the war, for so their pride stood, to accept the idea of becoming "wood and water joeys" for foreigners in their own land? For a brief time Australia regained an active role in combat but, as she faced the prospect of a steady and perhaps costly northward advance to victory and the prospect, too, of finding ways of producing more thousands of tons of food for the Americans in the South and South-West Pacific, the war was ended by cataclysmic bombs launched by decisions in which Australia had no part and about which she knew nothing beforehand. The terms of surrender were imposed on Japan by decisions made by others and without the name of Australia being mentioned as a belligerent.

The end of the war came as a relief. The old pictures of victory with a fanfare had already been lost. The military effort was already being unwound. The certainty of winning the war because of weight of power had been growing clearer for some time. There was no field of Waterloo nor even the launching of a final massive offensive as in Europe as a prelude to surrender. In August 1945 people did not celebrate a great and final victory. There was no crowning feat of glory. They rejoiced because the war was over.

During the last year or more of hostilities the actions and speeches of the Australian Government had been devoted as much to what would happen after the war was over as to what remained to be done while it was still being waged. The withdrawal of men and women from the forces to re-allocate manpower to meet new demands had also tended to turn thoughts towards a return to civil occupations. Hostilities ended with strong persuasions on the people to look forward to what was going to happen next rather than to look backward over the sacrifices and the effort by which victory had been reached.

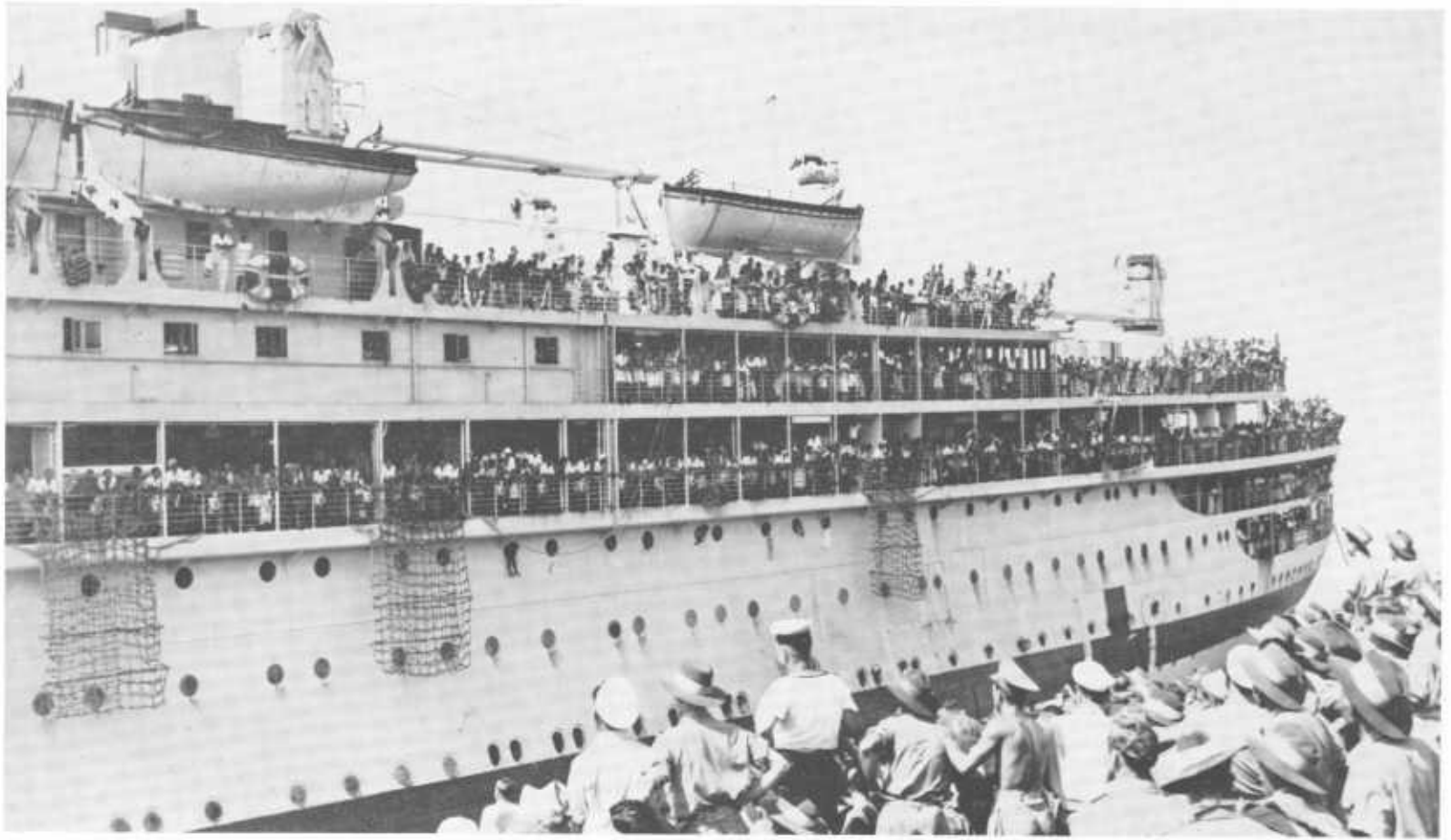
To the people the war had brought sorrow. It had also brought pride. The consolation of those who mourned lies in the privacy of their minds. When it was expressed in public it would seem to have been the consolation of knowing that a husband, son or brother had acted worthily. He had done his best, had stuck by his mates, had come through the testing time, had given his life for something greater than himself, had defended what was right. No one should reject or mock the well-worn phrases for behind them is the sadness and the pride of a noble people, and each word hides the grief at the loss of what one human being had loved more than anything else on this earth.

That personal grief and pride were shared by many more when the



Australian War Memorial

General Sir Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces, about to sign the surrender document at the ceremony on board the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September 1945.



Australian War Memorial

Patients and nurses line the rails of the hospital ship *Oranje* on her arrival at Darwin from Singapore with 760 former prisoners of war. The end of the war brought the release from Japanese hands of more than 14,500 Australians after three and a half years of captivity.

troops marched. Anyone who stood in wartime in an Australian city, immersed in the crowd, and watched the troops go by knew the strong and binding comradeship that a shared grief and pride can bring to men and women. It was not at the moment when the crowd cheered, but at the moment when emotion quietened them and the tears came unbidden while the men who had fought, strong, sun-tanned, tight-jawed and fit, swung past with that loose and confident stride that only Australian soldiers have; and, as rank succeeded rank, thoughts turned to those who had not come back and hearts were deeply moved by the patriotism which brings the dedication of men and women to causes that lift them out of themselves.

Among the deeply emotional experiences of war was also fear. Some Australians had talked for many years about the peril of invasion from Asia. Now all Australians had seen that it might really take place. More of them than ever before had learnt how precarious is the life of a nation. Many of them glimpsed for the first time in the history of their land the possibility of occupation by an enemy and subjection to alien rule and they learnt that the independence and the inviolability of an island continent cannot be taken for granted.

Only experience will show how long the influence of wartime emotion will last. The war itself, the deeds of Australians and the behaviour of the Australian nation under challenge of survival will pass into history and parts of it will become legend. The way the history is read and the legend told will be in the keeping of future generations of Australians, but whatever they do let them not forget that one undoubted outcome of the effort and the struggle was that there is still an Australian people and an Australian nation to make what it can, of its own will and serving its own ideals, of the freedom that was preserved for it by men who served and men who died.

Some of the other experiences of the war are more clearly observable. The war meant that during six years, to an increasing extent, the people were called upon to think and act as one nation and they were virtually under the leadership and control of one Australian government, with the State governments being used as its agents on most of the big matters and carrying on the local routine on other matters with reduced resources. Strictly speaking, the Federation still functioned as a federation because the Federal Constitution, as interpreted, allowed to the Federal Government this very great extension of authority by virtue of its powers in respect of defence. But the people had the unusual experience of acting in many more matters as a nation instead of as six separate parts of a nation. Again it is only the subsequent years that will tell how deep was the effect of wartime experience. When the war ended it was plain that centralised financial control and uniform taxation had been reinforced by the war.

The processes of demobilisation pointed to a growing need for Federal participation in education. The State Governments had grown to depend more on the decisions of the Federal Government.

An attempt at the referendum of 1944 to obtain additional powers for the Commonwealth by reference by the States for a brief period, possibly as a prelude to a request for permanent constitutional change, failed to gain a popular majority. It is doubtful, however, if the vote was one on the sole question of Federal powers. A popular objection to a continuation of controls, which was an avowed objective of seeking the powers, would appear to have been a very powerful influence on the voters. Another element in the voting was resentment to what was called "bureaucracy"—too many functionaries, not directly elected by the people, giving orders and directions and refusing or granting permission for this or that. Among a section of the voters, the question was also confused by an identification in their minds of unification and socialism and the fact that the government that sought extra powers was a socialist one. It is indeed questionable whether the vote at the referendum really meant a vote for the maintenance of States' rights without variation of any kind. Apart from the referendum, the discussions during and immediately after the war around this subject leave an impression that the contest for the maintenance of States' rights was keener among those who would exercise authority in the States than among the populace and that the habit of thinking nationally had grown and that there was readiness to recognise a need for national action on behalf of the whole nation. Certainly the superior position of the Australian Government and Parliament was accepted by the populace as a result of wartime practice. Certainly the Federal public servants and the State public servants had become more accustomed to working together on a wide variety of shared responsibilities. The procedures of cooperation between national and local governments through conferences, committees and commissions had been much more firmly established.

Younger Australians had been made conscious of the nation in a way that they had not known before. The population mingled. There was an old tradition that military units were raised in the States and kept a State identity. Such and such a battalion would be known as a Queensland battalion, or a Western Australian battalion. This tradition continued but, as the war progressed and the call-up was applied, the problems of manpower meant that new recruits were distributed where needed and men from several States might find themselves in the same unit. In the Air Force and Navy the mingling was even greater. Munitions work and construction work called for considerable movements of labour. Besides mingling with other Australians, the young man might be posted to parts of the Australian continent he had never seen before and the Sydney city dweller discovered the sand plains of Western Australia or the Tableland of Queensland. The full mobilisation of manpower meant that a very large proportion of the adult population shared this sort of experience. Australians went through a mixing-up process for which there had been no earlier parallel except perhaps in the gold rushes. Furthermore exhortation as well as duty had been national in its appeal for the whole six years. Australia had served as a nation and survived as a nation. In

those parts of the continent where foreign troops were present in large numbers, the identity of Australians was also established as Australians rather than as a number of local varieties of Australian. At the end of the war there was a stronger national consciousness than before the war.

Other wartime experiences of the population included changes of occupation and place of abode. For a number there was a change of opportunity. Leaving aside the opportunists who "did well out of the war" —and there were undoubtedly some post-war fortunes founded on wartime profits—the war brought opportunity to many people to take heavier responsibilities, to discover undeveloped talents, and to enter on duties that led them to a higher and a more active part in the nation's affairs. For a wider number of people it was a period of constant employment at standard wages in contrast with pre-war uncertainties about employment. During and after the war there was training in skills not previously attainable. Generally—and there were exceptions—one result of the war was a raising of the earnings of the family and of the productive capacity of the nation. There had been sacrifices of many kinds during the war both of life and of amenities, but most of those who survived it came out with better prospects than they had when they went in, and because they had been employed steadily while wages and prices were both held down and spending was curtailed by rationing many families came out financially stronger. Savings bank deposits and Government securities on issue in Australia more than doubled in five years.

There were disadvantages. There was often disruption of family life. For the very young there was sometimes a grave disturbance of their routine progress from school to training for an occupation or profession. There were many distractions for them and some slackening of the good influences that can be exerted by a stable and protective community. There were constant housing difficulties for those who transferred in civilian occupations from one place to another and makeshift and sub-standard housing were blamed by social workers for juvenile delinquency and the breaking-up of families.

There were many grisly stories current in wartime of the social evils. On this the historian encounters more opinions than facts. Perhaps some other writer studying the post-war development of Australia on the social side will be able to trace the origin of trends both good and bad to the happenings of the war years. The *Commonwealth Year Book* shows that during the war the marriage rate was maintained and was higher than it was to be in any five-year period after the war. The birth-rate fell slightly but not dramatically as it had done during the economic depression of the thirties. The rate of ex-nuptial births was a little higher than the figure immediately before the war but a good deal lower than the pre-war and post-war average. The infant mortality rate improved. The number of convicted prisoners showed no significant variation.

Limitation of liquor supplies kept total consumption of alcohol down but confirmed an Australian tendency to guzzle when it was got. Either

as part of the right employment of leisure, on which so much was written by pre-war social reformers, or as an abstraction from the war effort, countless hours were spent by men and women lining up to get beer when trading hours were restricted or in doing the necessary ground work to make certain of having more than their share when supplies were short. There were allegations of much black-marketing.

Newspapers were also very prolific in stories of many dodges and smart tricks being practised by unworthy persons and of fortunes being accumulated by the wicked to the most bitter envy of the righteous. The constantly-repeated governmental appeals for a total war effort and condemnation of those who were not responding gives official credence to these stories. They probably concerned the few rather than the many but they gained wide currency and the discouraging thought of inequality of sacrifice probably did as much damage to the total war effort as the actual diversion of resources or withholding of services that was alleged to have taken place. There was also a readily discernible limit on the sacrifice that could be imposed in respect of horse-racing and beer.

The Australian newspapers generally give a poor impression of Australia at war. The newspaper reader in wartime could scarcely have avoided receiving an impression that there was an incompetent government, much bungling in administration, grave errors in the conduct of the war, and constant suppression of what was called "the truth". There was so much of what was wrong and so little about what was right that anyone who eventually recognised the fact that, in spite of faults, the nation did achieve a major war effort would also tend to give a very low value to the evidence presented by newspaper columns in wartime. Yet, strangely, some of these stories in the newspapers were echoes or reports of what the country's leaders themselves were saying when exhorting the people to do more. Possibly the stories were true of the particular instances on which they were founded. The basic shortcoming of newspapers is to make the exceptional happening the principal event of each day.

The belief that there was exaggeration both by the political leaders and by the newspapers of these matters is linked with a suggestion that such exaggeration tended to make worse two weaknesses in the Australian character that were discernible in wartime conduct on the home front. The first is the lack of confidence that wartime leaders had in their people. They often complained, cajoled and even threatened, and they constantly exhorted the people to do more, but seldom did they appear to trust them. Seldom did they make the confident demand of leaders who are sure that their people are good, sound at heart and resolute. It may be, of course, that this was an accurate judgment by pragmatic politicians on the mind of the electorate. In the writer's own view it was a misjudgment of the people as a whole and it was a political error to let the behaviour of a recalcitrant or defective minority give shape to a speech. Whatever it was, it seems to reveal a weakness in the link between governed and governors.

The second weakness was revealed in the constant concern shown by some sections of the Australian people about uniformity of sacrifice. There were those whose judgment on what they themselves should do seemed to be related to their concern lest they might find themselves doing more than the next man. This is chain gang philosophy, the same attitude that is popularly expressed in such common phrases as "Don't stick your neck out", "That's not my worry" and "You'll get no thanks for it". It is a sentiment that is often associated with envy (or even resentment) against the more fortunate and with a tendency to put all blame on someone else.

Both these weaknesses throw into high relief that constant problem of democratic government—the communication between the governors and the governed. The newspapers tended to aggravate the difficulties and did nothing to resolve them. The Government failed to overcome them. The failure would appear to have been not one of intention but of technique. In this respect the Department of Information seems to have been singularly useless.

Over-riding all such impressions, however, is the awareness of the total effort that was actually made. The national effort was not easy to evoke or to organise but it was made. In proportion to population and resources there were probably no Allies save Britain who gave more than Australia did.

Australia was a good ally but it was one with an independent mind and a practice not merely of speaking its mind but of shouting to make sure it was heard. Sometimes the two Great Powers, Britain and America —there was virtually no direct contact with the Soviet Union before the San Francisco Conference and until a few days before the end they were not an enemy of Japan—found Australia somewhat troublesome. The only thing that an Australian need regret, however, is not that Australia insisted on its point of view, but that sometimes it thought it necessary to kick a man in the shins in order to impress his mind—a mistake in advocacy rather than an error of policy.

One task that Australia performed unremittingly from 1942 onwards was keeping the Pacific under notice and bringing others to a truer understanding of the situation there. This was not only a service to Australia but also one to the Allied cause. It expressed, not regionalism, but a view, established when Australia first fought in Europe, that, in the modern world, war, peace and security are global.

Any alliance has difficulties of leadership, command subordination, allotment of resources and generally of working together. Allies may share a common objective of winning the war but each of them will have distinctive needs and interests of its own on nearly every other subject.

This was the first direct experience an Australian Government had of being an ally in its own independent right with a number of foreign nations, both great and small. The experience of the First World War had given Australia some knowledge of the need for any contributor to

a common war effort to retain some control over the terms on which the contribution was used. It had little experience of the situation when great allies are joined with smaller and less powerful allies and when the nature and scale of modern warfare require not only single generalship in the field but also supreme command of combined operations and when many of the decisions on the conduct of the war concern not only the employment of forces but control of shipping, production of munitions, the allocation of aircraft and the supply of foodstuffs for industrial populations. Unified command necessarily brings some subordination to those who submit to it. The Great Power leadership in the waging of global war meant not only that they made decisions on the overall strategy of the war but on the most effective use of manifold resources. The concerting of the major decisions calls for the formation of higher councils of political leaders and there is not room in these councils for all; nor do the leaders of the great powers, making great commitments, willingly submit their decisions to debate among small powers who are making lesser commitments. The conduct of the war came into the hands of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin and, under them, of Supreme Commanders in those theatres where the troops of more than one nation were engaged.

The Australian Government tried to force an entrance into the higher councils of war but had limited success. In addition to the basic realities that attend any alliance there were two obstacles. The "Big Three" had themselves the perpetual problem of reaching agreement among themselves and especially the problem of working with the Soviet Union. It was a strange and difficult alliance. On the Australian side, it is doubtful if Ministers realised fully how strange and difficult it was and Evatt for one was inclined to blame Britain and America for not knowing how to work with the Soviet Union and to believe rather fondly that if Australia, in his own person, were more active in the higher councils it would be easier to find rapport with Moscow. Another obstacle was in the large number of allies. The Australian Government might rightly claim that the contribution it was making to the war effort entitled it to a stronger voice and, less publicly, it might make comparisons with other allies who had done little fighting or, having been over-run, had ceased to fight. But, for the leaders of the Great Powers, to let one smaller ally into the Councils meant an inability to keep all the others out. In cases when Australia thought it had achieved a place in the inner circle, as in the case of the Pacific War Council in Washington, the eventual outcome was that the membership was enlarged, the sigificance of proceedings was lessened and the instrumentality was in the inner circle no longer.

An example of the effect of these two obstacles is seen in what was the most successful bid by Australia to enter the higher councils—the membership of the British War Cabinet arranged in the time of Menzies. At the height of the war Bruce, the Australian representative, was actually sitting alongside one of the Big Three and in its innermost councils. Nowhere else was the same entrance to a point so close to the higher direction

of the war achieved, and probably the Australian Government shared in the top secrets of the higher direction of the war more consistently as a result of this arrangement and had a more immediate influence in what was done than by any other way. In part this was due to the exceptional qualities of Bruce and the high standing he had in London but largely it was the consequence of an unorthodox step, rather out of keeping with assertions of Australian national independence, which Menzies took in getting a place for his Government in the War Cabinet of another nation. Yet, as the war progressed, and Churchill became one among three great war leaders instead of being indomitably the only one, the importance of the British War Cabinet suffered a trichotomy.

Australia never achieved the same entrance to decision-making in Washington as it had in London. The Government made a great deal of the closeness of the relationship between Curtin and MacArthur and some contemporary commentators tended to see it as giving Australia unusual strength. The strength on certain sections of American public opinion was undoubtedly great but in practice MacArthur was one of many trying to influence the decisions of Washington in favour of his own ideas and to the advantage of his own command and was not one of those who made the decisions. The close association with him by the Prime Minister of Australia strengthened MacArthur's case and when the two were identical thereby strengthened Australia's case, but the method tended to put Australia in the role of one who was backing one side in an American debate rather than in the role of an ally stating its views as one nation to another nation. So much of the early Australian relationship with the United States after America became a combatant was one of a claimant for reinforcements and supplies. In the crises of 1942 any interest in the higher strategy was predominantly an interest in getting more reinforcements and more aeroplanes actually on their way into the Pacific.

Roosevelt took the view that it was the job of Churchill to clear the ground with other members of the British Commonwealth and to speak for the Commonwealth. This followed the lines of the formal arrangements for the conduct of the war made in early 1942. There was perhaps a tendency on the part of Churchill in performing this task either to assume too readily that the Dominions would let him speak for them or to expect them to allow a great deal of room for him to reach agreement with the Americans. He tended at times to think it was a sufficient answer to an Australian request to say that it would be difficult to get the Americans to accept it. On the occasions when the Australian Government chose to go direct to Washington they usually found Roosevelt less resistant to their views than Churchill. Although this was sometimes represented as a greater understanding or a higher consideration for Australia by Roosevelt, it might be fairer to see it as a more realistic view of the practical disadvantage of resisting Australia at the cost of time and temper. "Well, if that's the way they want it," Roosevelt shrugged off one demand. Australia was well represented in Washington in turn by

Casey, Dixon and Eggleston and Australia was well regarded but, in the nature of things, neither they nor visiting Ministers came as close to the heart of government in Washington as Australia did in London. There was some exaggeration in the claims that the Australian Government sometimes made to exceptional intimacy with the United States leaders.

In matters relating to the higher command in those theatres in which Australian troops were principally engaged the Government had been more successful. Under Menzies, when Australian troops were committed to the Middle East, while they were placed under the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief in the theatre, they were kept intact and Blamey as G.O.C., A.I.F. had a direct responsibility to the Australian Government and a right to communicate with that Government. Questions of policy regarding the employment of the force were to be decided by the United Kingdom Government and the Australian Government in consultation. When MacArthur became Supreme Commander in the South-West Pacific, Australian forces were allotted to him but Blamey became Commander of Allied Land Forces and the liaison worked out between MacArthur and Curtin, with direct communication, put the Australian Government in a position to join in decisions about the employment of its forces.

Towards the end of the war the conduct of the Australian war effort was only partly in the hands of the Australian Government. Events and the decisions of others had taken control to the extent that it was not left open to Curtin to choose a role. In theory he could have refused to do what Australia was expected to do but in practice he could only modify or adjust the decisions made by others or forced on him by situations created by others.

The wartime leadership of Australia is hard to evaluate largely because Australians do not seem to take kindly to leaders. "Let us now praise famous men" is heard on the lips of the citizenry much less often than "Who the hell does he think he is?" Men who come before the public gaze can be popular or unpopular, usually for reasons that have little to do with their merit. They can gain respect. Some will be listened to and even admired. But not even the captain of a Test cricket team can hope to get from the crowd that constant trust that brings men to say: "Tell us what is the right thing to do and we will support you when you do it." In national affairs there may be indifference or inattention to politics but there is no surrender of political judgment to another or unquestioning acceptance of the leadership of the exceptional man.

Neither the public at large nor their own parties and parliamentary supporters gave to Menzies or to Curtin a devoted loyalty. Neither man awakened in Australian hearts the fire that Churchill kindled in his people. It is not only a question of the leader's personality. The Australian Department of Information, possibly thinking that Curtin was lacking in appeal or for some other reason, persistently used the name and image of Churchill in its propaganda directed to the Australian public rather than the name of their own Prime Minister but it is extremely doubtful whether Churchill was accepted as a leader in Australia.

While facing the fact that neither Menzies nor Curtin became the dynamic, inspiring and fully-trusted leader of a nation at war, proper tribute should be paid to what both of them did in the organising and direction of the Australian war effort. Any comparison between them would be out of place for they faced different tasks in widely different circumstances, the one before Japan attacked and the other after, the one when combat was chiefly in Europe and the Middle East and the other when it was global; the one when Australia was still waking up and the other when the nation was fully aroused.

The contribution of Menzies was considerable. He laid down principles which were observed for the whole war. He made the basic organisation for munitions and construction which lasted throughout the war and he brought into that organisation from outside governmental circles those men who under Curtin were largely responsible for its success. The 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Divisions of the A.I.F. were raised under Menzies and many of the notable Australian commanders, including Blamey, were appointed. The Empire Air Training Scheme was started. The years 1940 and 1941 were years of substantial achievement and the response to crisis in the early months of 1942 owed a great deal to what had been done already.

Curtin had the longer, the more difficult and the greater wartime task to face. He had to impose on the nation controls, restrictions of freedom, direction of manpower, requisition of resources and prohibitions which would have been inconceivable at an earlier period. He had to conduct a total war effort and steer the nation through the days of great anxiety when an isolated Australia seemed to be in danger of invasion, and then through the many difficult problems set by the presence in great numbers in Australian territory of Allied forces. He had difficulties, complex in themselves and vital in their consequences, in matters related to inter-Allied cooperation and later in the war his government was drawn more and more into international activities.

Parliamentary politics presented him with fewer difficulties than Menzies had encountered. Talk at various times of a national government, as in Britain, had come to nothing and the party structure of politics continued but the contest between parties moderated. After the change of government in 1941 the new Opposition was left in a weakened state by the circumstances in which it had lost office while in 1942 the urgency of the national peril restrained criticism. After the 1943 election the Opposition had little capacity to cause any difficulty for the Government even if it had wished to do so. The chief parliamentary attack on Curtin's Ministry came from individuals, some on the Government side and some on the Opposition side, and the party political contest only sharpened when two post-war issues of socialism and increased Federal powers came to the front.

Curtin's chief political problems at home were in his own party, both in his parliamentary caucus and in the Australian Labour Party. One of his greatest achievements was the way he carried his party with him. Both

he and the party grew in stature and responsibility as higher demands were made on them. Some of his speeches that reveal most brightly the spark of greatness in him were speeches made to the Labour Party and, by repute and hearsay, some of the most dramatic and critical scenes of his wartime leadership were in the sessions of the party. The writer has been told by one who was present of a breath-stopping moment in the critical debate on conscription. Curtin had described the dangers to Australia, the threat of Japanese conquest and occupation, the things that Australians would suffer. Then he paused: "But they are not going to do that. We won't let them!"

Curtin would have regarded what he did for the Labour Party and with the Labour Party as his triumph. He had endured much but he had led it. But though he triumphed, the Labour Party helped to break him. The Labour Party had been his life. He believed in it as a great power, perhaps the greatest power, for the good of Australian men and women. Where Menzies could face striking coal miners and argue with them, Curtin felt their failure to respond to their own government's decisions as a betrayal of a Labour leader. Any report of absenteeism or slackness in a workshop was not just a human failing; it was a rebuff to his faith in the working class. The criticism, sometimes bitter, by his own parliamentary caucus was not just a political fight but a family wound. The shortcomings of some members of the Labour Party distressed him and the distress began to wear him down.

Another disappointment of a much less considerable kind was with the press. He had edited a party newspaper and had been an office holder in the Australian Journalists' Association. Whatever he might have thought about the proprietors of newspapers he had a noble picture of the working journalist. He became sadly disillusioned about the press and what he saw as their misrepresentation and unfairness. He tortured himself by paying too much attention to what they wrote.

A Prime Minister is necessarily a lonely man, in need of much reinforcement and of trusted support. He cannot fret or he will collapse or die. These two things did make Curtin fret. For a politician he was an unusually vulnerable man.

Let it be remembered that Curtin did not fight hard to become Prime Minister and showed some reticence about assuming office. Having come to the heavy responsibilities and finding them greatly increased by a new turn in a war that was already being waged, he grew in wisdom, character and strength with the added burdens that were laid on him. His own dedication was complete. He held back nothing from his service to the nation. For the first two years of office he overcame obstacle after obstacle and accomplished task after task with great resolution. But at the time when very properly he could have gained in confidence still further by looking at what he and his colleagues had done and when he could have fairly reasoned that the crisis had passed and eventual victory was certain, a change became perceptible. He began to question whether

he had done enough. Whether he could have done more. He moved towards an austerity of personal life and showed some intolerance to those whose self-indulgence showed that their dedication was incomplete. He worried more about criticism. He worked harder and harder and spared himself less. He felt the criticisms and the denigration both by the newspapers and by his own party members more keenly. Then physical tiredness and sickness came. A wholly committed man who had given everything he could and who had done much good for the nation became one of the most tragic casualties of the war.

The Prime Minister did not live to see victory, although victory was on its way. He had lived out his own text: "We have a heavy responsibility. I ask every Australian, man and woman, to go about their allotted task with full vigour and courage. . . . We shall hold this country and keep it as a citadel for the British-speaking race and as a place where civilisation will persist."

APPENDIX 1

CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATION

By JOYCE FISHER

PRE-WAR planning for civil defence was based on the principle of cooperation between Commonwealth and State Governments.[1] Most of the functions directly relevant to civil defence—police, fire brigades, ambulances, hospitals, industrial safety, transport services, water-supply, electricity, harbours, municipal services, for example—were under the control of State Governments. Thus the main executive responsibility fell on the States, with the Commonwealth undertaking the functions of coordinator.

Chapter VIII of the War Book was called "Civil Defence (Air Raid Precautions)" and its sub-headings not only indicated the lines along which planning should proceed but the matters which the planners then, and subsequently, saw as being the problems of civil defence.[2]

The War Book gave the responsibility for providing civil defence to the State Governments. Even before 1939 some attention had been given to civil defence plans, and from September 1939 each State Government, from its own funds and guided by publications and instructions from overseas (provided by the Commonwealth), pushed ahead with the work. The isolation of the various State efforts in the beginning led to later difficulties in coordinating those efforts. Although alike in general purpose the efforts revealed marked differences in policy and practice.

In Queensland the nucleus was within the police force. Mr Hanlon, the Minister for Health and Home Affairs, delegated power to the Com-

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[1] See also *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, pp. 118 and 125-6.

[2] 1. Preparatory Measures, Organisation and Propaganda
   (*a*) Preparatory Measures
   (*b*) Enrolment of Auxiliary Personnel
   (*c*) Enlightenment of the Public
   (*d*) Control of the Civil Population
2. General Precautionary Measures
   (*a*) Warning System
   (*b*) Lighting Restrictions
   (*c*) Control of Radio Transmission
   (*d*) Camouflage and Smoke Screens
3. Anti-Gas Measures
   (*a*) Supply of Respirators, Protective Clothing and Bleach
   (*b*) Training in Anti-Gas Measures and Precautions
   (*c*) Gas-Proofing of Buildings
   (*d*) First Aid, Decontamination Services, and Gas Detection
4. Protection of the Public
   (*a*) Air Raid Shelters
   (*b*) Fire Services
   (*c*) Treatment of Casualties
   (*d*) Schemes of Compensation for Damage to Property and Personal Injuries
5. Maintenance of Essential Services
   (*a*) Inland Transport
   (*b*) Merchant Shipping in Port and Docks
   (*c*) Public Utility Services
   (*d*) Food Supplies
   (*e*) Industry
   (*f*) Repair of Damage, and Rescue Services
      (i) Road Repairs, Clearance of Debris and Rescue Work
      (ii) Postal, Telegraph, Telephone and Wireless Services
6. Evacuation of Vulnerable Areas
7. Burial Without Inquest

missioner of Police. A Central A.R.P. Committee was appointed with headquarters in Brisbane; local A.R.P. committees were formed at various centres and made responsible for the development of civil defence plans for their own localities. In each case the mayor of the municipality and his principal officers constituted the committee, and with them were associated the local police officer, Government medical officer and fire and ambulance brigades. Training, including the training of women, began early in 1939. The *Air Raid Wardens Act* of 1939 was later replaced by the *Civil Defence Act*. Queensland was the only State where police had full statutory control of the air raid wardens' organisation. A.R.P. units were based on police divisions and a unit consisted of chief, assistant chief, divisional and assistant divisional wardens, and wardens. Each division was divided into sectors over which a divisional warden with an assistant was appointed. Suitable premises were chosen to house A.R.P. posts, each in charge of a senior warden. Initially only men were engaged as wardens but later women were enrolled. Wardens of buildings were also appointed, and all railway stations had wardens' posts manned by railway employees.

In Tasmania, too, local police divisions were used. A Ways and Means Committee set up in 1938 provided some training within the police force, but training became too large a task for the police when the civil population was included, and in March 1939 the Civil Defence Legion was created with a State executive under the Minister for Civil Defence (who was also Minister for Lands). The legion was organised first at Hobart and then at Launceston, under the *Civil Defence (Emergency Powers) Act* of 1939. A.R.P. sections were related to Government departments or utilities: for example, the section under the Commissioner of Police looked after enlistment and warning alarms; the Hydro-Electric Commission headed the section on light and power. In November 1941 the scheme was reorganized with zones and zone control as in England, and a State Control Centre.

In Western Australia a State Air Raids Precautions Committee, with sub-committees for essential services, medical supplies, public works, shelters, communications, transport and light restrictions, had been at work since July 1938. In January 1941 this organisation was given legal standing by the *Civil Defence (Emergency Powers) Act* of 1940 which created a Civil Defence Council designed to bring together the earlier voluntary efforts. The committees were increased to 15, and in December 1941 membership of the organisation had grown to 4,958. Air raid wardens were organised in three metropolitan divisions, also in country districts, and liaison with essential services was maintained through chief wardens. The first test mobilisation took place in April 1940, and there was a full district exercise at Nedlands in November 1940.

Victoria had set up a State Emergency Council for Civil Defence in March 1939 under Sir John Harris,[3] the Minister of Public Instruction

[3] Hon Sir John Harris, KBE. (1914-18: Medical Officer No. 1 Sqn AFC 1917-18.) MLC Vic 1920-46; Minister of Public Instruction and Public Health 1935-42. B. Chiltern, Vic, 24 Jan 1868. Died 16 Sep 1946.

and Public Health. Under him were four sub-committees: for enrolment of personnel, training, warning signals, and fire-fighting; for transport; for shelter and evacuation; and for medical services.

In South Australia preparations had begun in August 1937. In March 1939 a Commissioner of Civil Defence had been appointed[4] but legislation was not put through the State Parliament until the *Emergency Powers Act* of 1941, when a Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner headed an organisation which included an Advisory Council consisting of the Premier, Commissioner of Police, Commissioner of Civil Defence and twelve directors of "branches" drawn from the ranks of specialists in each particular activity.[5] Associated with the Commissioner of Civil Defence were the Civilian Welfare Bureau, the Women's War Council, local advisory committees and country organisations.

In New South Wales an Executive Committee had been in existence as early as 1935 but on 1st February 1939, prompted by the pre-war planners, a Department of National Emergency Services was set up and, through the medium of committees, sought to provide for wardens, first aid, decontamination, rescues, repairs, liaison with essential services and emergency communications. There were committees for technical advice: on shelters, demolition and rescue, warnings, lighting, vehicles, gas, and unexploded bombs.

Each metropolitan municipality and country shire was an A.R.P. "area", divided into "sectors" of from 250 to 500 people. For the "floating" population, trenches in parks and pill-boxes were planned, and public buildings such as schools were inspected to decide whether they were suitable as shelters or to house A.R.P. posts. Plans for evacuation involved wardens in the task of making registers of people in their sector, a task made difficult by the apathy of some members of the public and by the hostility of others. In the country (west of a line from the Victorian to the Queensland border passing through Narrandera and Burren Junction) a survey estimated that 138,700 people might be accommodated in houses and cottages, 43,845 in halls, and 9,200 in farm or station buildings. The yachtsmen's auxiliary (later the Sydney Harbour Patrol) was formed from owners of motor-boats in the harbour, Botany Bay, Lake Macquarie and the Hunter River, and in collaboration with the Maritime Services Board its members trained in the care and handling of waterfront casualties.

On 20th March 1941 a State *National Emergency Act* provided authority to spend money on A.R.P. including money from council and shire revenue. Until then training was in the main theoretical and control centres were not even equipped with telephones. The total number trained or in training was 15,000 persons.

In May 1941 the Department of National Emergency Services was

[4] Lt-Col P. G. Bice, succeeded in October 1940 by Lt-Col G. D. Shaw.

[5] The branches were: Communications and Warnings, ARP, Engineering, Emergency Fire Services, Evacuation and Quartering, Medical Services, Statutory Control, Livestock, Highways, Railways, Roads, Canteens.

reorganised[6] and committees were set up.[7] The first black-out test was on 29th May in Vaucluse and Waverley; subsequent tests for other suburbs followed, culminating in a test of the entire metropolitan area on 17th August. Country black-out tests began in the area north and west of Newcastle on 10th November 1941 and later tests were conducted in areas along the far north coast.

After March 1941 the Department of the Army was responsible for civilian defence in the Northern Territory. A chief air raid warden had been appointed in Darwin in June 1940, and the A.R.P. organisation worked closely with the representatives of the forces. They compiled a nominal roll of civilians in the territory which later proved of value during the evacuation of women and children and in the move of the administration to Alice Springs.

Most States developed their A.R.P. arrangements along the lines adopted in England. Civilian wardens and chief wardens were in charge of "posts", which were usually established in such places as railway stations or schools, although in residential areas and elsewhere specially constructed posts sometimes appeared in private residences. Towards the end of 1941 most factories or office buildings with large numbers of workers manned and equipped their own posts and established their own small A.R.P. organisation within the building. Wardens were issued with special equipment where it was available, but frequently lack of equipment irked A.R.P. workers.

Training also followed the methods employed in Great Britain. Much information came from the Department of Defence Coordination, where the Director of Civilian Defence and State Cooperation, Lieut-Colonel Thirkell,[8] had done what he could to achieve some uniformity. State organisations distributed training pamphlets to their wardens and general literature for the education of the civilian. Almost invariably established bodies such as the St John Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross Society were responsible for the initial training of first aid groups.

Emphasis was at first placed on combating gas, but later switched to precautions against high-explosive and incendiary bombs. Control of lighting was planned. Types of shelters were discussed and air raid warning systems were installed or contemplated. In every role, however, the civilian's effort was voluntary—whether he manned a post or drove a transport, waited at a first aid centre or patrolled the black-out. Tests were held, both at night and in the daytime, more frequently as the organisations matured and the danger of war in the Pacific mounted.

Among these civil defence organisations examples of confusion and of variety between the State authorities were numerous. The title "chief

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[6] Initially the department had been attached to the Minister for Transport, but from May 1941 a separate Minister for National Emergency Services (R. J. Heffron) was in charge.

[7] They were: Technical, Air Raid Warning, Wartime Light Restriction, Hospitals, Medical Services, Evacuation and Vehicle Lighting. These committees were gazetted under regulations on 22nd August 1941.

[8] Colonel R. W. M. Thirkell, MBE, VD. Director of Civilian Defence and State Cooperation 1940-41; in control of lugger ops NG 1942-44, of mother-of-pearl shell fishing 1944-45. B. Richmond, Tas, 13 Feb 1890. Died 7 Apr 1954.

warden" had the following interpretation in each State: principal civil defence officer in each municipal organisation in New South Wales; the State's chief operational officer in Victoria; the principal air raid warden in each police district in Queensland; the principal executive officer in charge of the whole State organisation in Western Australia; the principal civil defence officer in each city or town in Tasmania.[9] The States had developed their own codes of warning signals:

Queensland:	"Warning Signal"—fluctuating note
	"Raiders Passed"—continuous blast
New South Wales:	"Warning Signal"—intermittent blasts
	"Raiders Passed"—continuous blast
Victoria:	"Prepare for Raid"—short and long blasts
	"Raid Impending"—short blasts
	"All Clear"—continuous blast
South Australia:	"Action Warning"—short blasts
	"Raiders Passed"—continuous blast
Western Australia:	"Action Warning"—intermittent blasts
	"Raiders Passed"—continuous blast
Tasmania:	"Alert Signal"—long blasts
	"All Clear Signal"—alternate long and short blasts

The duration of the warning signals also varied.

A uniform colour warning code was used by the services: preliminary caution (yellow), cancel caution (white), action warning (red), raiders passed (green). With the exception of Queensland and Tasmania the States introduced colour codes of their own.[1]

The dangers of misinterpretation by people moving from one State to another were apparent. In August 1941 when the matter was brought up by the services the States pointed out that they had already prepared printed matter and begun training A.R.P. personnel in their own particular warning code and for the time being no change was made.

Until 26th June 1941 when the Prime Minister, Mr Menzies, created the Department of Home Security with Mr J. P. Abbott as Minister, the Commonwealth's participation had been guided by the Director of Civilian Defence and State Cooperation, Lieut-Colonel Thirkell. A report by Thirkell dated 6th January 1941[2] indicated the need for coordination. Thirkell had visited all States between June and December 1940. On field exercises "carried out . . . under ideal conditions" he reported that two States, South Australia and Tasmania, could, "with short intensified

[9] The names of the ARP organisations in the several States were:
New South Wales: National Emergency Services
Victoria: State Emergency Services
Queensland: Civil Defence Organisation
South Australia: Civil Defence Force
Western Australia: Department of Civil Defence
Tasmania: Civil Defence Legion
Australian Capital Territory: Enemy Raids Precaution.

[1] A standard code was not agreed upon until late in 1942 when, after a conference of Commonwealth and State civil defence executives in Melbourne on 11th and 12th August 1942, all States decided to adopt the uniform code of the services.

[2] War Cabinet Minute 617, 4 Nov 1940, asked for advice on the probable scale of attack that should govern plans for protection of the civil population and the extent to which they should be implemented now in the light of the existing international situation and probable future developments; the Defence Committee considered Thirkell's report and their recommendations (Agendum 5/1941) were considered by the War Cabinet (Minute 862, 27 Feb 1941).

training and if issued with equipment" be reasonably expected to deal with an emergency; but all other States required much training and a considerable increase of personnel. Fire-fighting equipment had been augmented but more was required. Reserves of medical supplies were being received and built up in hospitals and Voluntary Aid personnel were being trained.

In adopting suitable lighting and black-out for air raid precautions the problems were complex. It was desirable that a black-out should be immediate and achieved, ideally, by the use of one main switch. But in Adelaide the two power houses could not be linked without expensive equipment. Moreover the cessation of power revealed the need for subsidiary supplies to maintain essential services: in an Adelaide test in October 1940 the sewerage pumping plant had stopped and it had taken three weeks to bring the system back to normal. In New South Wales and Victoria switch gear had been installed, and in Victoria considerable money had been spent on duplicate lines and shading devices. Most Australian power houses, said Thirkell, were vulnerable because of the "vast amount of glass" through which light was visible, especially at Swan River, Perth, while in Tasmania, where the source of power was hydro-electric, the dam at Mena was, he thought, vulnerable.

Shelters were being "planned only". All States had plans for augmenting transport for civilian defence but here too there was uncertainty: should we, asked the South Australian Government, augment the public services by private vehicles at the time of the emergency, or actually acquire vehicles and hold them in reserve against the need for use at such a time?

Plans for evacuation were not very far advanced in Queensland or New South Wales; Victoria's plans for certain duties nominated by the Department of the Army were well advanced, and the same could be said for South Australia; plans were "proceeding" in Tasmania, and had "started" in Western Australia.

In air raid warning systems the chief weakness lay in dependence on power; only in Victoria was there a duplicate manual system which could be used. Western Australia had no sirens in June 1940, and in Tasmania factory whistles were augmented "by 6-volt sirens erected at various stations and on cars operated from Police Headquarters".

At the administrative level the New South Wales and South Australian Premiers had asked for delegation of Commonwealth powers to deal with A.R.P. preparations; Queensland had passed a *State Public Safety Act* in 1940; Victoria had passed an act validating expenditure by councils in connection with A.R.P. precautionary measures; Western Australia was preparing a *State Emergency Act* and Tasmania had passed one.

With the exception of anti-gas equipment and A.R.P. manuals and publications issued by the Commonwealth Government, all expenditure had so far been borne by the States, and State Governments were "of the belief that the financial position in respect of States will not permit them to continue meeting full costs incurred as State A.R.P. measures are

fully developed". Thirkell appreciated that Commonwealth financial participation would increase the Commonwealth's ability to assume greater control of preparations. Without financial participation, Commonwealth control would be lessened. In any case should the development be on State or on Commonwealth lines? Failure to create a Commonwealth nucleus would prevent control in time of emergency. It seems clear that the director already saw the problems which the Commonwealth Government later sought to solve by the creation of its Department of Home Security in June 1941. In the meantime the director's suggestion was that the Commonwealth should assume financial responsibility up to £500,000 for portion of the capital cost of air raid precautions.

The War Cabinet considered these views and those of the Defence Committee on 8th January 1941.[3] Development of civil defence was governed by the weight and scale of attack expected. The Defence Committee assessed this, as it had in 1939, at 70 tons of bombs of a mixed nature within a period of 24 hours and not more than one attack in any one fortnight; no gas attack was so far known in the present war and the probability seemed remote; in South Australia and Tasmania the outlined weight of attack was not considered likely although the capital cities might be attacked; in Sydney and Melbourne plans should be for 1,000 wounded in 24 hours, but first aid arrangements should cover 2,000 in any one area and in any one fortnight; other States should plan for lower figures.

The Defence Committee thought it "prudent foresight that passive defence measures should continue to be organised as matter of public interest and security", but the main emphasis should be on planning, because the diversion of funds otherwise available for active defence was not justified.

An approximate order of priority was recommended:

(*a*) completion of planning to enable controlled lighting schemes to be introduced at short notice;
(*b*) provision of fire-fighting equipment;
(*c*) planning of first aid organisation and provision of medical equipment;
(*d*) introduction of A.R.P. warning schemes;
(*e*) further development of definite plans for A.R.P. in connection with military objectives in vulnerable areas;
(*f*) training of key personnel of essential services (police, fire brigades, etc.) in passive defence measures;
(*g*) instructions to the public on most effective means for avoiding casualties from high explosive bombs, for controlling incendiary bombs, and in first aid;
(*h*) planning measures in relation to air raid shelters (the *provision* of shelters was not recommended at this stage);
(*i*) planning for evacuation of civilians from vulnerable areas.

Only in connection with lighting and fire-fighting schemes was expense warranted "to bring plans to an advanced stage so that they may be

[3] War Cabinet Minute 686.

implemented at short notice"; other priorities were to remain on a planning basis and should involve only limited expenditure of funds and effort.

All this the War Cabinet approved, but a committee of representatives from the Treasury and Defence Coordination and the Director of Civilian Defence were to confer about the extent to which the Commonwealth should contribute to the cost. The committee's recommendations were approved on 27th February.[4] The States were to be responsible for A.R.P. plans and were to accept financial liability, but the Commonwealth was to continue to assist by providing anti-gas equipment and A.R.P. publications and was to coordinate all A.R.P. plans. The Commonwealth would support provision by the Loan Council of loan moneys for expenditure on A.R.P. The allocation of cost arising from precautions for private establishments was left to the State Governments, and the same principle applied generally to camouflage of Government establishments, the Commonwealth accepting liability for camouflage[5] of its own buildings. With the above as a basis the State Premiers might now confer. It transpired, however, that early State elections in Queensland and South Australia made this impossible. Instead a brief statement of the Commonwealth's views was sent to each Premier, and a preliminary conference was held of State directors or executive officers to discuss questions of uniform procedure and policy.

Directors and executive officers met on 27th and 28th March 1941. The conference revealed that, apart from the organisations which had been set up, the greatest progress made was in the arrangements for restricted lighting, and in the provision of warning sirens. The conference revealed too the perennial State opposition to any suggestion of dictation by the Commonwealth. There emerged, however, a working basis for the future: the Commonwealth was to lay down principles, but the details were to be left to the States to carry out; there should be frequent Commonwealth-State conferences between the experts and uniformity in plans for essential services was desirable; stocks of medical equipment were to be built up; arrangements should be planned for the disposal of the dead; steps should be taken to arrest the drift of men from A.R.P. services to the Volunteer Defence Corps; and "with a view to the more effective development of A.R.P. measures throughout Australia" the appointment of a Minister of State for Civil Defence was urged.

By April 1941 the Chief of the General Staff thought the time was opportune to revise the estimated scale of attack on which A.R.P. precautions were based. In the subsequent report,[6] however, the previous estimate of the weight of bombs was unchanged and the same view was accepted of circumstances that might prevail should Japan enter the war. The same measures as before were recommended and the War Cabinet

[4] War Cabinet Minute 862.

[5] This was a vexed technical question. See D. P. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry*, Chapter 23.

[6] Supplement 2 to Agendum 5/1941; War Cabinet Minute 1281, 23 Jul.

approved these and agreed that the State Premiers should be informed of them. Service establishments and munitions and Commonwealth establishments should conform to the principles laid down and coordinate as far as possible with State schemes. Plans for air-raid shelters should be based on the adaptation of basements as shelters, and where possible on the dispersal of the population, and should provide also for trench shelters. They should not provide for the construction of deep shelters. This exclusion of deep shelters was reiterated in a decision by the Full Cabinet on finance a week earlier.[7]

The Minister for Home Security, Mr Abbott, had now taken over. His recommendations were (i) that the Commonwealth should be prepared to assist the States by way of grants not exceeding £1,000,000 in regard to the first six of the eight priorities laid down earlier[8] by the Defence Committee, on condition that the money be expended in vulnerable areas and on projects, and (ii) that in respect of the balance required to carry out work on the priorities to the stage recommended by the Commonwealth the States be permitted to raise loan money through the Loan Council up to £1,000,000. The War Cabinet agreed to these recommendations "in principle", but added that no amount of Commonwealth financial commitment should be specified "at this juncture"; the details were to be left to the decision of a Cabinet sub-committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Home Security. Their decision on 6th August was that the Commonwealth should provide up to £500,000 on the basis of a £1 for £1 subsidy towards the first six of the eight priorities to the stage recommended by the Commonwealth, that loan money over and above normal allocations and up to the extent of the Commonwealth grant should be made available to the States to meet their moiety of the cost, but that provision of funds was subject to the funds being expended in vulnerable areas as defined from time to time by the Defence Committee, and the projects approved by the Minister for Home Security.

The meeting of State Premiers, which followed the Loan Council meeting of 8th-9th August 1941, accepted the sub-committee's proposals and these were formally communicated to the Premiers in a letter from the Prime Minister of 15th August:

> In effect, what the above proposals mean is that of the expenditure necessary in the vulnerable areas to bring the six priorities up to the standards the Commonwealth considers necessary, the Commonwealth, after approval, would be prepared to meet half of the cost by way of grant up to a similar extent on such items as represent an appropriate capital charge.
>
> It should be observed that the proposal does not in any way change the position under which the States accept responsibility for implementing A.R.P. plans in their State along the broad policy lines conveyed to them by the Commonwealth Government at the March 1939 and subsequent conferences.
>
> It is desired also to confirm the undertaking given at the recent Conference in Canberra by the Minister for Home Security on behalf of the Commonwealth

[7] Full Cabinet Minute 35, 16 Jul 1941.
[8] In War Cabinet Minute 686, 8 Jan 1941.

Government that the Commonwealth would support the provision by the Loan Council to the States of loan moneys up to the amount shown in the memorandum presented to the Premiers and under the conditions mentioned.[9]

From the time the department commenced the Minister for Home Security, Mr Abbott, worked towards coordination of civil defence by visiting each State for conferences with those in charge. On 25th and 26th August he brought together all State civil defence ministers, their chief executives and representatives of the services, the Treasury, Trade and Customs and the Commonwealth advisers on lighting and fire-fighting.[1] The agenda was comprehensive, covering all the items of civil defence organisation: lighting, warning systems, fire-fighting equipment, first aid training, instructions to the public, equipment, telephones, compensation, petrol supplies, measures by Commonwealth departments, camouflage, disposal of the dead, training outside vulnerable areas, hospitals and evacuation, control centres and shelters and provision of materials. Most of the items were based on submissions made by one or more of the States. Mr Abbott reported that advisers on lighting and fire-fighting had been appointed and questionnaires on both subjects had been sent to the State Governments. The results would be discussed at the conference. Equipment was being sought under Lend-Lease, additional respirators had been supplied for training, steel helmets were being supplied and more were being obtained. Regulations would be issued covering camouflage, compensation for civil defence volunteers was being arranged, and better information about United Kingdom experience was being obtained. He reiterated the financial arrangements already described.

Abbott said that his department's figures, collated from information provided by the States, revealed that a total of 95,000 people had trained or were training in A.R.P. organisations: the number trained in first aid was highest, then came wardens, police and firemen. In the discussion which followed considerable emphasis was placed on a definition of controlled (or restricted) lighting and "black-out". It was clear that different interpretations existed, but the conference accepted the view that the former, entailing prohibition of non-essential lights (e.g. advertising), reduction of essential lights, arrangements to put out lights and the fitting of screens to vehicle lights should come into operation when a state of emergency was proclaimed (the entry of Japan was agreed to represent this emergency) and "black-out" should mean the extinction of all exterior lighting, and all light emitted from buildings. Vehicular traffic was to stop except for approved vehicles after an air raid warning. The question of differing air raid warning signals—three signals were given in Victoria and two in the other States—though discussed was dropped by general agreement, but Home Security was asked to help in obtaining motors to give the signals. State Ministers decided that fire-fighting should be dis-

[9] Appendix "A" to report of "Conference of Fire-Fighting Authorities from all States held at Department of Home Security, Melbourne, 1st-3rd September 1941". See also Agendum 379/1941; War Cabinet Minute 1509, 17 Nov 1941.

[1] War Cabinet Agendum 379/1941; "Conference of Commonwealth and State Representatives on Air Raid Precautions held at Parliament House, Melbourne, 25th and 26th August 1941".

cussed by State chiefs brought summarily together on the following Monday, and any discussion of fire-fighting must include emergency water-supply.[2] Mr Heffron,[3] the New South Wales Minister for National Emergency Services, said stirrup pumps were now regarded as essential to quell incendiary bombs, although until recently the advice had been not to use water but only sand. The conference decided to let Home Security seek supplies under Lend-Lease.

Victoria was unhappy about first aid equipment but connected this with a complaint that they had as yet had nothing from the agreed grant of £500,000 for State A.R.P. expenditure. The matter awaited the submission of schedules from the States and, after discussion, the Queensland representative, Mr Hanlon, suggested the allocation of one-quarter of the subsidy on a population basis, and to this extent "piecemeal" requirements would be approved immediately, the remainder being allocated on the basis of requirements for protection of vulnerable areas.

The task of bomb disposal was unanimously handed over to the Army, although Sir John Harris, for Victoria, sought an assurance that the Army would not take those of his civil defence personnel who had so far been trained in this branch.[4] Discussion of instructions to the public gave rise to complaints about the sale of unauthorised printed matter, but it was agreed that this could be handled by the States themselves. Provision and design of badges was also left with the States. Home Security was to press for the provision of materials to make more realistic bombs for use in training and to seek priorities for telephones for civil defence.

Representations about compensation had come from Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, and the matter was clearly important in such fields as fire-fighting where, for example, civilians might be reluctant to climb ladders if there was no assurance of compensation. It was alleged that recruiting for civil defence was adversely affected by the lack of compensation arrangements. Abbott's problem as chairman and representative of the Commonwealth Government, with whom the responsibility for a compensation scheme was to lie, was whether the Government could afford a scheme that covered the whole country or should seek to cover only civilian defence workers in vulnerable areas.[5] Sir John Harris was specially critical of the failure of Commonwealth departments to do anything about air raid precautions in their own establishments, and

[2] In discussion of fires and incendiaries the special problems of areas such as Queensland, where buildings except in the main city centre were weatherboard, were mentioned.

[3] Hon R. J. Heffron, MLA NSW 1930-68; Minister for National Emergency Services 1941-44, for Education 1944-60; Premier of New South Wales 1959-64. B. Thames, NZ, 10 Sep 1890.

[4] Earlier Mr Heffron had wanted the same assurance about men trained in heavy rescue and demolition.

[5] Regulations were gazetted on 15 Dec 1941—National Security (Civil Defence Volunteers' Compensation) Regulations, No. 288, administered by the Repatriation Commission. The maximum rate of pension was £4 4s a fortnight and a "training injury" was one sustained as a member of an approved civil defence organisation and directly attributable to that training or instruction but did not include "any injury sustained by him while travelling to or from any place at which [he] intends to or has undergone . . . training or instruction". Any civil defence organisation might apply to the Minister for Home Security to become an approved organisation.
The War Injuries Compensation Regulations of 8 Jan 1942 were afterwards amended to include "war injury" as well as training injury (Statutory Rules No. 53, 11 Feb 1942).

Abbott could do no more than assure the conference that "departments had been furnished with particulars of the priorities and the degree of development desired by the Commonwealth". Camouflage, he reported, was now under a Commonwealth-wide organisation.

Finally the conference turned to shelters. Discussion revealed that in all States not much more than planning of shelters had been done: in New South Wales, the Sydney underground railway offered a ready-made type of deep shelter, but no State intended to construct them. Surface shelters and trench shelters were regarded as more efficient and more appropriate, and some speakers declared that in Britain fewer people were using deep shelters. Different States had different problems of terrain. In Western Australia "fifty million pounds would not cover a shelter which would be of any value" because the place was "only a sand patch" and "we would have to get the sand out".[6] It was clear that even if trenches or surface shelters were adopted the matter would ultimately be one of cost, and the conference closed with the chairman reiterating his earlier statement that 25 per cent of the grant should immediately be paid, and that discussions on a code for shelters should continue between his department and each State.[7]

At a conference of fire-fighting authorities held in Melbourne on 1st-3rd September a continuing cause of disagreement between Commonwealth and State authorities was apparent: the vulnerable (or vital) areas as defined by the Commonwealth did not necessarily coincide with those defined by the States. "Vulnerable", as defined by the Defence Committee, had been applied to the capital cities of each State as well as Newcastle, Port Kembla and Lithgow in New South Wales; Townsville and Thursday Island in Queensland; Waddamana in Tasmania; Geelong and Yallourn in Victoria; Fremantle in Western Australia; and Port Moresby and Rabaul. Western Australia, however, considered that Collie, Albany, Bunbury and Geraldton should also be regarded as "vulnerable"; South Australia considered that Port Pirie and Whyalla were vulnerable and should be so treated; Queensland named all the important coastal towns from Thursday Island to Bundaberg as vulnerable, and included also Warwick and Toowoomba. On this point, however, the conference of Ministers in August had decided that the inclusion of additional areas should be a matter for submission to the Commonwealth Government by the States concerned, with a view to possible amendment.

It was apparent that different terms were being used for the same fire-fighting equipment and that a first step should be the establishment of a common set of terms. In the meantime about two-thirds of the submissions under the scheme for Commonwealth finance of A.R.P. equipment was for fire-fighting equipment, and the amount required was well over the limit set by the Commonwealth. However, since fire-fighting

[6] Hon A. H. Panton, Minister for Mines and Health, and (from 1942) Minister for Civil Defence.

[7] A classification presented to the conference had listed five hazards: aerial machine-gun fire, incendiary bombs, blast splinters and debris from 500-lb high-explosive bombs, flying glass, and anti-aircraft shrapnel; but members agreed that if a shelter gave protection against the third item it should be adequate for the others.

equipment had to come from overseas, inquiries had been made whether it could be obtained under Lend-Lease. If this was possible the cost of the remaining equipment would be within the financial limit. The Ministers had agreed in August that 25 per cent of the Commonwealth grant should be allocated on a population basis, and 75 per cent according to needs in relation to vulnerable areas within the States' boundaries. A sum of £125,000 had already been allocated on the subsidy basis and the War Cabinet approved another £125,000;[8] the Loan Council members were to be approached privately for approval of additional loan moneys to enable the States to meet their share.

Then in December Japan entered the war.[9] On the day after the Japanese attack the Defence Committee recommended that the Premier of New South Wales should not be advised to impose a black-out nightly: the resulting loss of production would be too serious. In view of the present risk of attack there should be no black-out, but preparations should be made for the imposition of a black-out at short notice. At the same time the committee laid down an order of priority for the immediate dull-painting and protection of bulk oil installations.[1]

Civil defence was discussed in the War Cabinet two days later. It was decided that, by amendment of National Security Regulations, the Premiers were to be authorised, after consulting the Minister for Home Security and the commander of the military district, to

(*a*) direct any total or partial black-out and to prohibit or regulate the display of lights of any description within the State;

(*b*) make such provision as they deem necessary to protect the persons and property of the civil population in an emergency.[2]

On 15th December the Full Cabinet's decisions on civil defence were recorded as those of the War Cabinet also. The spending of £1,000,000 was authorised and the amount (additional to amounts mentioned earlier) was to be "drawn against by the Minister for Home Security in respect of urgent measures taken by State Premiers after consultation with the Minister for Home Security".[3] Three days later £389,000 was approved for A.R.P. measures in munitions factories.[4]

In Canberra on 20th December 1941[5] State Ministers had before them an account of measures which had been taken since the August conference, and in response to the "emergency" now twelve days old. The chairman,

[8] War Cabinet Minute 1509, 17 Nov, on Agendum 379/1941.

[9] The change of Federal Government in October had brought Mr H. P. Lazzarini to the portfolio of Home Security.

[1] Minute 173, 9 Dec 1941. The meeting was attended by the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Home Security.

[2] War Cabinet Minute 1559, 11 Dec; Statutory Rules 1941, No. 287, Section 35A. The powers were extended on 20th October 1942 (Statutory Rules, No. 448). The restrictions, described in Chapter 2 and elsewhere, on hours of business, late shopping, etc., were approved. At the same meeting (Minute 1569), it was decided that the Department of Home Security should have its own permanent head instead of using the Secretariat of Defence Coordination and an Assistant Secretary (Home Security) in that department.

[3] Full Cabinet Minutes 43, 44 and 45 of 15 Dec 1941.

[4] War Cabinet Minute 1599, 18 Dec.

[5] *Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers on Air Raid Precautions held in Canberra, 20th December 1941.*

Mr Lazzarini, the new Minister for Home Security, reported on the authority given to Premiers. National Security Regulations on 16th December 1941[6] gave the Minister authority to take protective measures at bulk oil installations, and notices had already been sent to owners in vital areas. Tenders were being sought for 543 trailer pumps and for 500,000 stirrup pumps. National Security Regulations now covered pensions for civil defence volunteers injured in training. Discussions had been held with transport authorities about the needs of civil defence when dealing with the general impressment of vehicles by the services. Steps had been taken to publish standard specifications for civil defence materials such as lamps, wire and black-out material. A school for care and maintenance of respirators would be held on 12th January at Maribyrnong. Mr Lazzarini warned, as Mr Abbott had done at the August conference, that it would take some little time for Commonwealth establishments to be equipped with restricted lighting and other similar precautionary measures.

An appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff repeated the earlier estimates of type and weight of attack. "If, however, the Japanese should acquire land bases from which air attack upon the mainland of Australia could be launched, it would be likely that attractive targets within range would be attacked more often. In the event of an invasion of Australia based from the adjacent islands, we think that it is not possible to set limits to the scale and weight of the attack in the areas where invasion is attempted."

In response to protests from Mr Heffron (New South Wales) and Sir John Harris (Victoria) about the effects of army impressment of vehicles, Mr Howse[7] of the Department of Transport announced that the Army had agreed to leave the impressment in the hands of his department. Originally the Army had intended to take a census of all vehicles in Australia for its own requirements. Such questions as the acquisition of vehicles suitable for conversion to ambulances—whether for civilians or for the services—would be a matter for the local Director of Transport, and the Department of Transport's job would be to provide vehicles in the event of an evacuation. The Commonwealth had now taken over camouflage altogether, including dull painting of industrial establishments.

Supplies of the heavy service respirator, which was regarded as more appropriate for an A.R.P. man, were being sought from the munitions factory at Maribyrnong, but a lighter type for civilian use was not made in Australia and was being sought overseas; headpieces for them could, however, be made in Australia. There was a prospect of increased supplies of steel helmets in January.

Sir John Harris complained that munitions factories had spoiled a recent Victorian black-out, and Mr Lazzarini announced that instructions had been issued that in future all such factories must participate in black-outs.

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[6] Statutory Rules, No. 298, 1941, National Security (Protection of Bulk Oil Installations) Regulations.

[7] D. J. Howse, Director of Rail Transport 1940-45; Chief Traffic Mgr NSW Railways 1948-58. B. Winkfield, Berks, England, 8 Jun 1893.

Both Lazzarini and Heffron stated that there had been a clamour for large-scale evacuation. Lazzarini said:

> There has been a very considerable measure of publicity on the question of evacuation of civilian population from various areas along the east coast and some of the south coast areas. . . . It is the view of the Commonwealth that this matter should be handled with particular care, otherwise very unfortunate results may well ensue. . . .
>
> Anything, therefore, which is likely to cause uncertainty in the minds of the people and interfere with their will to put forward the best they can, anything which may have the result of interfering with the productive effort of the men, such as wholesale evacuation of their wives to country areas, is not in the best interests of Australia. . . . It is most desirable that these women-folk, whose husbands and sons and daughters are engaged in long hours in productive work, should remain at their posts with their families and keep them in good fettle for this arduous work.[8]

The army's view had always been that people should "stay put".

Both Mr Heffron and Sir John Harris affirmed their responsibility to see that casualties were avoided and announced that, if the Commonwealth would not put evacuation among the "priorities", they would go ahead with plans with or without aid from the Commonwealth. Mr Lazzarini promised to advise the Government of the views expressed. The State Ministers were warned of the need to be prepared for attacks at weekends and on holidays.

Restricted (or controlled) lighting areas, additional to the now well-established "vulnerable" areas, were Bathurst and Orange in New South Wales; Canberra; Ballarat and Castlemaine in Victoria; Salisbury in South Australia; and Launceston in Tasmania. The Defence Committee now regarded "the area within ten miles from the sea" and "all towns within 100 miles of the coast" as requiring restricted lighting. Their advice was:

> (i) a "black-out" should not be imposed at present;
>
> (ii) arrangements should be made to enable a "black-out" to be imposed at short notice;
>
> (iii) for the present, lighting should be reduced to bring about a so-called "brown-out" by means of extinguishing unnecessary external lights and subduing necessary external lights such as street lights by shading them to obstruct upward and lateral illumination, or where this cannot readily be done, by painting all but the bottom of globes.[9]

All agreed with the recommendation that the States should take action accordingly, with the Commonwealth sharing the cost on a basis to be determined. Air raid precautions were to be extended to the areas within ten miles of the sea described by the Defence Committee, but on a modified scale only, and not on the intensified basis which was proceeding for the "vulnerable" or "vital" areas.

The Defence Committee's recommendations regarding air raid shelters were also put forward as the policy of the Commonwealth:

> (*a*) That the normal dispersion of the civil population in their own homes provides the best means for their protection;

[8] Conference report, pp. 7-8.
[9] Conference report, p. 10.

(*b*) In special cases, such as those of industrial enterprises situated in congested parts of vital areas which employ large numbers of employees and are engaged continuously on essential war work, the provision of shelters by the adaptation of basements or the making of trenches should now be effected. In such cases where neither of these alternatives is possible, surface shelters to give a like measure of protection should be provided;

(*c*) That in general the provision of special splinter and blast-proof shelters is not warranted, but where it is necessary to provide such shelters in cases falling within recommendation (*b*) or where the normal dispersion recommended in (*a*) would not give the protection it is designed to provide, as, for instance, where houses are crowded against one another in densely populated areas, then such special splinter and blast-proof shelters should be provided;

(*d*) That deep air raid shelters should not be made.

If the States needed legislation to carry out this policy the Commonwealth would agree to the issue of an order by the Premier of each State concerned under National Security Regulations.[1] Individuals would not be required to provide shelters, but they should not be discouraged, and, if they did build shelters, they should do so in accordance with standard design. Heffron reported the existence of railway tunnels, and an unused tunnel for a sewer outfall, which could accommodate some 160,000 people; Mr Cooper[2] (Queensland) announced that his Government had urged people to construct their own backyard shelters and that in Brisbane "numbers of pill-box shelters to hold about 50 or 60 people are being constructed in the streets. . . . They are splinter-proof structures of 8-inch concrete about 42 feet 6 inches long which are not fixed to the ground and so will not collapse in an explosion." Nearly all regarded construction of deep air raid shelters as undesirable and a motion to that effect was carried with only Mr Heffron dissenting. The New South Wales Minister wanted the States to be free to construct them "if it were found necessary"; he also disagreed with Lazzarini's suggestion that Commonwealth and State might share the cost of shelters provided in congested areas, declaring that, in his opinion, the States should not be asked to share the cost. "Just as it is the responsibility of the nation to defend the country against an invader who lands on one of our beaches, so, in my opinion, the nation should make provision for defence against bombs. The States should not be asked to share the cost."

The upshot was a resolution that private persons should provide their shelters at their own cost, that if communal shelters were necessary the Commonwealth should accept responsibility for the cost, and that where industry had to provide protection for its employees the industry should bear the cost. Lazzarini announced Commonwealth agreement with the first and third points but said that he could only put the second to his Government.

Protection of power houses should, according to the Defence Committee,

[1] Statutory Rules 1941, No. 287.

[2] Hon F. A. Cooper, MLA Qld 1915-46; Treasurer 1938-44; Premier, Chief Secretary and Vice-President of Executive Council 1942-46. B. 1872. Died 30 Nov 1949.

take priority over protection of any other plant, and in general protection of plant which was irreplaceable at present or which would take considerable time to replace should be considered vital. The method of protection would be according to the British code, with emphasis on baffle walls constructed of brick, and should provide adequate protection against flying glass and incendiary bombs.

A shortage of surgical dressings brought about by heavy buying had led to discussions with the Medical Equipment Control Committee, as a result of which all orders for civil defence had thenceforth to go through an officer attached to State civil defence and then be placed by the Contracts Control Board.

Most of the matters raised by the States had been dealt with in the course of these discussions. There remained, however, a request for exemption of trained air raid personnel from military service, which Mr Lazzarini promised to take up, and the need for assurance that the army would not requisition the services of doctors on whom the A.R.P. organisation would be relying. It was decided that lists of such doctors should be prepared for the Medical Coordination Committee. "The varying circumstances in local States and questions peculiar to those States" made the devising of uniform instructions to the public impracticable. The army had not been able to get on with the provision of bomb-disposal squads, and those States which had earlier made provision for these were asked to continue to do so for the time being. A.R.P. telephone rentals would be shared on a £1 for £1 basis. Reference was made finally to the £1,000,000 which had earlier been announced as having been made available to the Minister for Home Security. The balance of the initial £250,000 would be distributed immediately. Thereafter up to £200,000 would be set aside to cover provision of additional equipment other than steel helmets; the balance would be allocated on the basis of the recent grant, i.e. on the States' needs in relation to vulnerable areas in their boundaries. However, in addition to the six priorities agreed upon in August, there were now two more: shelters and evacuation.

At the level of actual participation in A.R.P. work the various State organisations reacted to Japan's entry into the war by intensified training and enthusiasm. In Queensland monthly meetings of the chief and assistant chief wardens were inaugurated by the Commissioner of Police. Equipment went principally to coastal towns north of the Tropic of Capricorn. At its peak the organisation contained 28,576 people—23,864 male wardens, 2,471 female wardens, 651 padre wardens and 1,590 messengers. Plans for evacuation were prepared and numbers of women, children and invalids were moved from the coast, although before any considerable movement occurred the war situation had improved sufficiently to make it unnecessary. The "nerve centre" was the basement of Roma Street Police Station, Brisbane, and included an engine room for ventilating the establishment, a telephone room, trunk-line room, controllers' room, message room, dispatch room and orderly room. Police officers were placed at military

headquarters and subsequently at the R.A.A.F. Fighter Sector headquarters to relay information to the control centre. Alarm signals to country centres were conveyed by trunk-line telephone by means of four special lines connected to the control centre.

Raids occurred at Thursday Island and Townsville in March and July, but Brisbane had its first alert on 20th August 1942 about 10.26 a.m., the all clear sounding at 11.26 a.m. The reason for the alert was the presence of unidentified planes, later found to be Allied. From 27th October 1941 to 17th March 1943 there were five yellow warnings in Brisbane, the last warning in the State being at Cairns on 1st July 1943.

In Tasmania an air raid wardens' service was inaugurated and the Civil Defence Legion was brought under regulations and attested. By October 1942 the register at Police Headquarters, Hobart, included 13,793 people, the largest section being the special constables. Auxiliary fire brigades had been formed in Launceston; now fire-spotting was introduced and an anti-gas section of the A.R.P. organisation formed. Local problems arising during tests included conflict between street squads and first aid squads because too much appeared to be done by the former.

In Western Australia raid and fire-spotting services were developed in 1942. West Australian Newspapers Limited had worked out a scheme for their staff and this provided the model for those developed elsewhere. A Citizens' Reception Council—an organisation from the 1914-18 war—attended to the feeding of A.R.P. workers. By July 1943 the number of workers had grown to 16,921.

In Victoria on 3rd January 1942 the State Emergency Council for Civil Defence was disbanded and replaced by seven executive committees gazetted under National Security Regulation 35A on 19th February. These covered emergency services personnel, transport, works, evacuation, medical and hospital services, power and fuel supplies and rural fire-fighting services. The Police Department was entrusted with the organisation of communications and warning systems and this was done from Russell Street Station; the centre had the title D24. Municipal boundaries marked the A.R.P. subdivisions and total enrolments of male and female workers were in the vicinity of 60,000. District control centres were linked with D24 and the whole system involved more than 3,000 telephones, 490 of them directly connected to municipal control centres, which were established in 50 municipalities. An alternative State control centre was established in case the main centre was out of action.

At the peak 2,500 men and 200 women had been sworn in as auxiliary police and 600 as emergency firemen, mainly for the country authority, which included the Geelong area. In the metropolitan area and in 134 country towns over 800 warning sirens were erected. To feed the A.R.P. workers voluntary donors provided eight mobile canteens. Publicity included a radio play, talks, and the *A.R.P. Review* as well as over 500 displays by A.R.P. workers to total attendances of more than 150,000. The Chief Commissioner of Police was the Chief Warden. In fire-fighting the pro-

fessional service provided training for volunteers and, to test skill as well as maintain interest, conducted examinations for various grades up to that of deputy group leader (one red bar) who might be in charge of the whole staff in the absence of a group officer, and up to that of group officer who might be in charge of a whole parade. In addition, "to avoid disappointment and promote harmony", positions were retained for only six months and competitions were promoted between different districts. At a stage when permanent staff were being continually transferred to duty at the wharves where explosives were being unloaded the voluntary personnel were available for duty. The machinery shops reconditioned discarded hose carriages in order to provide equipment for training. There were 69 first aid posts; medical personnel and training came from the Red Cross Society, whose drivers also helped in training volunteers for auxiliary ambulances. These emergency drivers numbered 1,691 men and 199 women in Melbourne and 31 men and 44 women in Geelong. A total of 276 vehicles were made available by business houses and fitted with special racks which could take up to four stretchers. Emergency hospitals were planned but not used, just as evacuation plans were not used, except that the Children's Hospital went to Sherbrooke and Macedon in 1941-42 and returned in February 1943, and the midwifery section of the Queen Victoria Hospital went to the Victorian Golf Club at Cheltenham until September 1943.

In South Australia A.R.P. personnel were appointed at schools and a film "Beating the Bomber on the School Front" was made to assist training. Warning sirens replaced the factory whistles which had been pressed into use after the entry of Japan, and a weekly test of the apparatus was made. Emergency communications, mainly by boys and girls with bicycles, were developed, although as time went on and tyres and spare parts became unprocurable this scheme had to be dropped. The Fire Services Brigade was associated with men for emergency fire services, and the total permanent and voluntary staff reached 1,500. Four emergency hospitals and 23 auxiliary hospitals with about 1,000 beds and equipment were organised. There were 10 first aid posts, 27 first aid depots and 3 subsidiary aid posts with 4 mobile first aid units. Training was given in rescue and demolition and, while tyres and tubes and spare parts were available, in the road transport branch which had 1,833 vehicles and 2,338 drivers.

A "skeleton" raid and fire-watching organisation was developed and under a fire-watching order of 16th January 1942 (*Emergency Powers Act*, 1941) equipment and training in factories, offices, banks, shops, churches, colleges, clubs, hotels, Government buildings and places of amusement in Adelaide became compulsory. This order was amended on 30th April 1942 to provide for watching from specially constructed towers, and on 22nd September 1942 Port Pirie was included. Shelters for watchers were erected on roofs. At Port Adelaide the greater part of the city could be "watched" from a grain silo 130 feet high. Fire watching became compulsory in February 1942, but a reduced system applied from 1st May. Groups

were rostered, each group including 6 men—a fire-fighting squad of 4, one stretcher bearer and one warden for general duties. Plans for evacuation were prepared.

In New South Wales from December 1941 a Director of National Emergency Services was appointed as head of the A.R.P. organisation. Maximum enrolment of people in a voluntary capacity was to reach 115,418, of whom over 62,000 were wardens and over 15,000 were aid post personnel. Most of the first aid workers were women. There were 2,500 people in A.R.P. posts formed in large Commonwealth and industrial establishments; these worked in conjunction with local A.R.P. centres. In city areas 279 sirens were installed; 185 were installed in the country. At a cost of £120,000 some 70,000 feet of trenches were dug; 139 pill-boxes and about 36,000 feet of covered trenches were erected.[3] Veterinary services were arranged in 32 areas. The Civilian War Emergency Aid Service was organised in the Sydney metropolitan area through local councils. The Minister for Labour and Industry and Social Services (later Welfare) was responsible for inaugurating the service, which established rest centres, stores depots and canteen services to provide shelter, clothing and food for civilians who might have to be moved from city areas damaged by raids. A considerable amount of the clothing was provided by making up or altering military salvage stock; 825 rest centres and 22 stores depots estimated to be able to cope with 65,000 homeless people were provided from State Government funds.[4]

As a result of Japan's entry into the war State Premiers, as mentioned, had been given powers to impose complete or partial black-outs and these powers were used in due course, although where existing State legislation permitted (as for example in Western Australia) orders were made without waiting for the Commonwealth powers.[5]

The War Cabinet discussed civil defence at the end of January 1942 and directed that the Minister for Home Security should attend a War Cabinet meeting next day.[6] Lighting and air raid warning systems were discussed. The Minister outlined the measures in the eastern States for a

[3] The extent to which shelter provision was provided in New South Wales up to the time that the Commonwealth Government called a halt is indicated by the figures at December 1943:

	Estimated number requiring shelter	Shelter accommodation available for
For floating population—		
Sydney and suburbs	93,356	35,697
Newcastle	6,320	5,971
Port Kembla	1,400	750
	101,076	42,418
For schools—		
Sydney	70,481	43,345
Newcastle	10,380	8,143
Port Kembla	435	435
	81,296	51,923

[4] Statement from Department of Labour and Industry and Social Welfare enclosed in letter from Minister, 10 Apr 1945.

[5] In Western Australia, however, the State Parliament disallowed orders which sought to abolish window displays, and also orders for restricted lighting. Those for restricted lighting were re-established on 22nd May 1942 by orders under Regulation 35A of National Security (General) Regulations.

[6] War Cabinet Minutes 1755 (24 Jan), 1761 (25 Jan) and 1767 (26 Jan).

"brown-out", and mentioned the lack of uniformity in action taken in the various localities. The Chiefs of Staff thought that a good brown-out was all that was necessary except for factories which should be blacked-out in view of their inability to apply an effective brown-out. The War Cabinet directed that a test of the brown-out should be carried out by the R.A.A.F.; headlights on motor-cars should be dimmed and the screening of harbour and navigation lights examined in collaboration with the Navy; the Minister for Home Security was to take up with the State authorities any defects in present lighting restrictions revealed by the R.A.A.F. tests. Observations by the War Cabinet on the information about warning systems presented by the Minister, and by the Chiefs of Staff, emphasised the need to reduce the time taken to apply a black-out. They regarded ten minutes at Ipswich (Queensland), five minutes in Western Australia, and five to six minutes in Tasmania as too long. Arrangements for warnings, which were considered generally backward in South Australia, must be completed as "expeditiously as possible". In Western Australia the demand by army headquarters for a black-out should go direct to the A.R.P. control centre and not through the Commissioner of Police. At Launceston in Tasmania a reporting agency should be established if none existed already. Systems of warning A.R.P. authorities should be fully effective and adequate coordination was needed between those authorities and the services especially in regard to direct communication. A response to demands for a black-out from the service authority should be automatic, not discretionary. If two or more sources of electric power existed, as, for example, at Sydney, machinery should be such that the whole of the exterior lighting in the area could be extinguished by a single operation. War Cabinet decided that a trial black-out should be held with short notice on a date to be arranged.

The supply of sandbags, although not the direct responsibility of the Commonwealth, had nevertheless to be taken into account in the Commonwealth's decisions about shelters, protection of vital plant and protection of power houses. At that time all existing stocks of sandbags and hessian were frozen by the Department of the Army and civil defence requirements could be met only by placing orders on India through the Department of Supply and Development. Lastly, in view of the doubts about delivery from the United States of the much-needed fire-fighting equipment, other avenues of supply had been explored and orders placed in the United Kingdom for hose and trailer pumps. The £1,000,000 at the Minister's disposal was now absorbed in providing equipment accepted as the Commonwealth's responsibility and the provision of other equipment on the basis of a subsidy. The Cabinet responded by approving £500,000 for assistance in providing shelter protection at vital State instrumentalities and extending air raid precautions, and £500,000 for Commonwealth establishment of A.R.P. measures.[7] For the latter measures another £500,000 was approved in March.[8]

[7] War Cabinet Minute 1768, 26 Jan 1942.
[8] War Cabinet Minute 2028, 19 Mar 1942.

On 3rd and 4th February 1942 Commonwealth and State Ministers again met in Canberra and a review of air raid precautions arrangements was included in the discussion. The chief concern of the Commonwealth was the report on the brown-out, which the War Cabinet had made arrangements to test by R.A.A.F. reconnaissance flights. Arrangements in South Australia had been criticised in the press, but the Minister for Home Security, Mr Lazzarini, now reported having made representations which had effected improvements. The aerial reconnaissance report had been favourable, but brown-out conditions in New South Wales were reported from the same source to be most unsatisfactory. There was general agreement that brown-out arrangements should be intensified particularly by reducing exterior lighting still further. Where lights faced seaward they were to be dispensed with altogether, and interior lights were to be screened; transport lights should also be suitably screened, and wharf and ship lighting should be reduced by screening, provided there was no interference with loading and unloading arrangements.

This last problem was discussed in relation to the graving dock at Sydney and defence work at Eagle Farm in Brisbane. It had been proposed that floodlighting should be installed to allow uninterrupted work 24 hours a day. The Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, discounted any argument about the risk. "It is too bad if the whole of the community cannot conform to a general practice even if there is a special exception to it. The floodlighting could be shut off at the first warning of approaching danger."[9]

The same problem of interference with production arose in discussing trial black-outs. Should tests be at prearranged times or should they be a surprise? Much of the value of the test would be destroyed if there was warning of its date; on the other hand munitions authorities had specifically asked in South Australia for advance warning "so as to avoid unnecessary waste". The compromise reached was that the day would be announced but not the hour.[1] Allotment of the £500,000 agreed to on 26th January by the War Cabinet was discussed. Curtin announced that it was not a condition of this allotment that it be matched on a £1 for £1 basis by the States although the general agreement was that they might do so, and that money so provided by the States might be spent outside the priorities. Complaints from Mr Playford, Premier of South Australia, about delays in providing materials for sirens and for switches, as the result of "freezing" orders, were countered by Mr Curtin who explained the needs of the war effort as a whole and the need to allocate priorities. Similarly a Western Australian complaint about the call-up for military service of A.R.P. workers should be left with the Director of Manpower, the States giving particulars of their key men to Home Security.

In the weeks that followed the allocation of limited supplies continued to be a vexing problem. The Defence Committee, at the request of the

[9] *Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers held at Canberra, 3rd and 4th February 1942*, p. 27.

[1] It was held over the whole Australian coastline on the night of Wednesday, 11th February 1942. Lazzarini reported that the most noticeable defects were lighting of motor vehicles, lighting at some factories and the striking of matches.

Director-General of Munitions, considered Home Security's requirement of 500,000 stirrup pumps and decided that, in view of the demands for brass tubing required in the pumps but also required for naval condensers, merchant ships' boilers, radio direction-finding equipment and aircraft and signals, the quantity should be limited to 5,000 weekly.[2] In January steel helmets, required by the services and India as well as Home Security, were allotted at 8,000 a month for the Army, 5,000 for Home Security and 3,000 for India;[3] but when Home Security needed more and there were urgent demands from the services no further supplies went to India and the allocation became: Army 9,500, Home Security 5,000, Air 1,000, Navy 500.[4] Service respirators—the heavy type considered suitable for issue to wardens—were allocated on the basis of 50,000 a month (Army 30,000, Home Security 19,000, Air 1,000).[5] However, when 50,000 a month could not be achieved, priorities were raised for this item and the production allocated on the basis: Army 75 per cent, Home Security 20 per cent, Air 3 per cent and Navy 2 per cent.[6]

One million civilian respirators had been ordered from the United Kingdom and 3,000,000 from the United States. The Defence Committee recommended that there should be no issue to the public: when the respirators became available they should be assembled and stored and held ready for distribution to people in the Sydney-Newcastle-Port Kembla area "considered most liable to gas attack"; in the absence of further advice there should be no issue until it was definitely known that the enemy was using gas. The War Cabinet approved this, but directed that, while planning, training and preliminary organisation concerning the respirators might proceed, the State authorities should "refrain from making any public announcement whatever regarding the arrangements". No bulk deliveries had yet been made and Dr Evatt was to be asked for advice about production in America.[7]

During this period the introduction of compulsory fire-watching created some industrial problems of a minor nature. No provision had been made for remuneration or compensation of fire-watchers and State Governments, Commonwealth departments and other establishments sought the advice of the Department of Home Security. The existing practice varied: a meal allowance of two shillings was paid by some Public Service departments; some employers paid only subsistence allowance, or a fixed weekly sum; in other cases full award rates were paid. In New South Wales some civilian fire-watchers were claiming three shillings an hour; and if this was agreed to the "aggregate financial burden on the community would be very great". (In the United Kingdom duties were compulsory but

[2] At this stage the Minister for Home Security was urging sandmats as the easiest means at the disposal of the public to extinguish incendiary bombs; 1,000,000 dodgers were being printed about them.
[3] War Cabinet Minute 1687, 13 Jan 1942.
[4] War Cabinet Minute 2085, 9 Apr.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 1688, 13 Jan.
[6] Defence Committee, 22 Apr 1942.
[7] Defence Committee, 20 March; War Cabinet Minute 2084, 9 Apr 1942. The respirators were a lighter type than the service respirator. Containers were to come from England, but, as mentioned, the face-pieces could be manufactured in Australia.

there was no payment for serving outside working hours.)[8] The War Cabinet approved the recommendation that service in the civil defence organisation should be regarded as a national duty and no payment should be made for it outside working hours other than meal allowances and any additional fares directly and reasonably incurred. However, the period of service should not exceed 48 hours a month. A proposal that all males between the ages of 18 and 60 who were not in the services, the police, fire brigades or the V.D.C. should be liable for fire squads or roof-watching duties was approved and steps were taken to make this a direction under National Security Regulations.[9]

But before an order was issued the matter became the subject of a submission to a conference of Commonwealth and State representatives held at the same time as a Premiers' Conference on 22nd and 23rd April. This submission included a provision that persons able to satisfy the Minister for Home Security that they were medically unfit or engaged on vital defence work for exceptionally long hours might be exempt. Persons liable for service would be required to register; hours of duty were laid down; the compulsory service was stipulated as service outside business hours. It was proposed that the allotment of personnel to duties should be at the discretion of the principal executive officer in any civil defence organisation. Rates proposed were two shillings for up to 6 hours' service, four shillings for up to 12 hours' service, and six shillings for service in excess of 12 hours, service in all periods to be continuous. It emerged from the discussion that in Queensland the Trades and Labour Council had taken the stand that no employee should be required by his employer to do any A.R.P. service on his premises; from New South Wales came the comment that employers had complained that certain employees had enrolled as wardens ostensibly for the purpose of avoiding compulsory civil-defence service. It was clear that the scheme would run into difficulties within its own ranks since, if auxiliary firemen were exempted, it would be argued that wardens should be exempt as well.

Difficulties in obtaining supplies were again brought up for discussion, and again the representative of the Department of Supply asked that the items be collated, and that a single authority—the Department of Home Security—should deal with his department. For metals, however, each State should go to the Board of Area Management of the Department of Munitions. Production of linings was the latest difficulty in the supply of steel helmets and rubber in the supply of the heavy service-type respirator; with these items preference had to be given to target areas and to people such as police and firemen. (The mishandling of this type of equipment was a source of complaint by the Army.) Timber for coffins and materials for decontamination needed allocation. Some sandbags had arrived and were being distributed, but, because the Indian source of supply was now doubtful, inquiries were being made in America. The price of stirrup pumps was set at £1 12s 10d, but there was some discussion

[8] War Cabinet Minute 2027, 19 Mar 1942.
[9] War Cabinet Minute 2027, 19 Mar 1942.

about sales tax being levied on the item, and about the appropriateness of paying municipal authorities 5 per cent for distribution to the public.[1]

The remaining items on the agenda were in general concerned with the vexed question of lighting. The brown-out problem itself was thought more appropriate for decision at the Premiers' Conference, but that conference was mainly concerned with the question of establishing one taxing authority and found no time for discussion of the brown-out. The detailed items, however, were discussed by the A.R.P. representatives and included the problems of contracts held by lighting companies for neon signs, and the lighting of motor vehicles.[2]

In March the Defence Committee had considered correspondence between the Departments of Home Security, Munitions and the Army on revision of A.R.P. areas. The committee referred to the "existing confusion of terminology in relation to areas" and considered that "A.R.P. areas were those in which A.R.P. measures are required including lighting restrictions, fire-fighting and first aid; controlled lighting areas were areas in which precautionary measures are limited to the control of lighting". A.R.P. areas were classified, the numbers in descending order from 10 to 4 indicating the comparative liability to attack of each place or group from most liable to least liable:

10. Darwin, Port Moresby
9. Townsville, Brisbane
8. Sydney, Newcastle, Port Kembla
7. Perth, Fremantle
6. Melbourne, Geelong, Whyalla, Port Pirie, Hobart
5. Yallourn, Lithgow, Waddamana
4. Salisbury, Adelaide

It was noted that the Commonwealth Government in December had decided to regard all areas within 10 miles of the sea as being also A.R.P. areas, but that plans should be on a modified scale in those areas; controlled lighting areas thus covered areas within 10 miles of the sea, all towns within 100 miles of the coast, and, in addition, Bathurst, Orange, Bendigo, Albury and Tamworth.[3]

On 5th May, however, General Blamey commented on the Defence Committee's code for civil defence:

> Bearing in mind our recent increases in security measures in the way of additional anti-aircraft defences, radio location sets and fighter aircraft, I am of opinion that some relaxation of measures in relation to street lighting could be accepted for the present in the area south of Port Macquarie in the Eastern States, in South Australia and Tasmania generally, and east of a line Albany-Merredin in Western Australia, provided that
>
> (*a*) ability to impose a black-out at short notice is retained;

[1] A press statement by the Minister for Home Security on 17th November 1942 said "ample supplies . . . now available . . . 33/6 each in every part of Australia".

[2] See "Report of Conference of Commonwealth and State Representatives on A.R.P. held in Melbourne on 22nd and 23rd April", and *Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers, held at Melbourne, 22nd and 23rd April 1942.*

[3] Defence Committee meeting, 4 Mar 1942. The towns were those where munitions factories were either planned or in production as part of the Munitions Department scheme for dispersal of production plants and employment of rural towns' labour.

(*b*) all unnecessary external lights are eliminated such as advertising signs; and

(*c*) lighting visible from seawards is specially screened.

Restrictions on the amount of light emitted from motor car headlights in Britain caused so large a number of traffic casualties as to become a menace. I am informed that similar conditions are producing the same results in Australia. I consider that these might be relaxed in the areas specified in order to minimise traffic casualties. . . .

It is suggested that street lighting could be improved by the utilisation of a larger number of screened points of lower candle-power.

In areas north of those specifically mentioned the general conditions specified by the Chief of Staff should be complied with. But close liaison should be maintained between the State authorities and the commander of the forces on the spot in all cases.[4]

Accordingly the State Governments were informed that some relaxation of measures in relation to street lighting could be accepted in the areas indicated by the Commander-in-Chief,[5] and that improvement should first be carried out in the main city areas by filling empty lighting sockets with globes of not more than 100 watts, suitably screened. Reintroduction of lighting had taken place, therefore, in such places as safety centres at tramway stopping places; some 80 per cent of lamps had been restored in Victoria; and in South Australia street lighting was normal except that lamps were limited to 100 watts and were not coated with paint as before.

Despite Blamey's suggestions about motor vehicle lighting, the Commonwealth view was that better street lighting would improve matters sufficiently, and for the time being restrictions on motor vehicles would be lifted only for public transport. These directions were clear enough, but the complaints which continued to come to the Department of Home Security were the same as those which had come before. In Western Australia the military drivers did not comply with black-out conditions. In Victoria special restrictions were imposed but the various aerodromes throughout the State were "a blaze of light" and military vehicles travelled with "glaring lights". Mr Chifley (acting as Chairman in Mr Curtin's absence) promised to bring the matter before the War Cabinet.[6]

Elsewhere at the conference of A.R.P. representatives much the same items as they had covered at their April meeting were discussed, but on equipment the reports were more satisfactory. Difficulties with steel helmets, stirrup pumps and trailer pumps had been overcome and canvas fire hose was being distributed. Shortage of rubber still delayed service respirators, but a list of deliveries of equipment showed:

Steel helmets, 156,203
Civilian respirators, 47,000
Service respirators, 98,178
Stirrup pumps, 105,964
Trailer pumps, 127
Sandbags, 5,500,000
Fire hose, 182,600 feet.

[4] *Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers held at Melbourne, 10th, 11th and 12th August 1942.*

[5] The Minister for Home Security made a press statement to this effect on 13th May 1942.

[6] Conference report, pp. 26-7.

Queensland and South Australia wanted the adoption of a preliminary air raid warning signal. The Department of Home Security was against this, and the view of the military authorities was that there were no special circumstances in Brisbane which would justify the inclusion of a third signal. In South Australia the reason prompting the request had been to assist in manning A.R.P. posts where people had long distances to travel. But in the light of British experience it was felt that, with a third signal, there would be dislocation if a signal was given and then a raid did not actually occur. On the question of "colour" signals, as used in inter-service communication about raids, the R.A.A.F. wanted uniformity. A change which had occurred in Western Australia, where at the direction of the area officer the preliminary "yellow" had been discarded, was not approved by the air force.

The size of the establishment of A.R.P. services was discussed—in Victoria there were 3 wardens for every 500 people. The New South Wales representative who brought up the matter gave as his reason the difficulties brought about by the Allied Works Council call-up and the need to counter their claims with a definite figure desirable for A.R.P.[7]

Nothing definite had been done about establishing compulsory civil defence service but the conference was presented with a "draft model order" which could be used by State Premiers under Regulation 35A.[8]

Reference was made to a conference to be held on the provision of shelters, on protection of glass in factories, and protection of vital plant. This had its origins in a report submitted by the Department of Home Security to the Defence Committee in May. The department's two experts had been round Australia between 14th March and 8th April 1942 and their report, said the department, showed that "shelter protection in Australia cannot be considered adequate if we are to be subject to heavy or prolonged raids". They had urged attention to the provision of shelters "if we are to maintain the civilian morale and keep up production despite enemy raids". The Director-General of Allied Works had suggested, however, that the present programme should be reduced to conserve power. The programme set out in the report was a long one and for the present they asked that it be recommended for places in the first four of the classified A.R.P. priority areas. The Defence Committee's view (on 22nd May) was that "Australia is not likely to be subjected to heavy or prolonged raids at present . . . no additional air raid shelter protection should be undertaken which conflicted with the requirements of manpower and materials for active defence measures". A conference of technicians was held with a view to establishing a "code" for shelters, and one for protection of vital plant and for protection from shatterable materials.[9]

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[7] On 19th May the Minister for Home Security had announced that the Director-General of Manpower had approved the general principle that existing civil defence personnel should not be given exemption from military service unless over 45 if single and over 35 if married, but urged that A.R.P. personnel should be enlisted from protected undertakings and reserved occupations.

[8] "Report of Conference of Commonwealth and State Representatives on A.R.P., held in Melbourne on 11th and 12th August 1942."

[9] "Report of Conference of Technical Representatives held in Canberra on 24th August 1942."

At the level of policy, however, the Minister for Defence on 8th August had approved the recommendations of the Defence Committee that "in view of the increases in security, notably those resulting from the Battle of Midway, protective measures including shelter protection and protection of vital plant should remain in abeyance in Australia except in Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle, Port Kembla, Perth and Fremantle".[1] And the Defence Committee reaffirmed its conclusion that even in those areas no additional air raid shelter protection should be undertaken which would conflict with the requirements of manpower and materials.[2]

At this stage although the Defence Committee felt the war situation warranted less concern about shelters they would not endorse further relaxation of lighting restrictions. In New South Wales the changes indicated at the Ministers' conference in August had been followed by the removal of screens in the metropolitan area, except where lights were visible from the sea. This had been done without the approval of the Department of Home Security, and the Premier of New South Wales was asked to hold the matter in abeyance. The department did not endorse the relaxation; the previous ruling, as a result of Blamey's advice about the area south of Port Macquarie, was that screened lights to prevent upward illumination should be retained and that bulbs should not exceed 100 watts. The Premier of New South Wales contended that there had been an improvement in the security of Australia since lighting restrictions were first imposed, that street lights were now under remote control and could be blacked-out at short notice, that the brown-out did not prevent the location of cities, and that, in any case, the existence of light such as that from lighthouses, glare from Port Kembla and Newcastle, and night lights at the graving dock negatived the value of the brown-out and created conditions that were a danger to the lives of people. To this the Defence Committee retorted that the brown-out did have the effect of reducing sky glow and making difficult the location of targets as well as reducing danger to vessels which might be silhouetted near the coast.

Although the increases of security in Australia in recent months have justified a substantial relaxation of A.R.P. restrictions the situation does not warrant a wholesale abandonment of measures which have been completed at considerable cost and which as now relaxed are not burdensome, when such measures contribute in some degree to our security against enemy attacks from sea and air and if abandoned now might have to be reimposed if the situation deteriorated. The present measures restricting street lighting are in this category and the circumstance that they are at present rendered less effective than they would otherwise be by the existence of other justified sources of light at places such as the graving dock Sydney and the steel works at Newcastle and Port Kembla does not warrant their abandonment.

At a War Cabinet meeting on 28th October the Government indicated it would be guided by the views of the Defence Committee in this matter.[3]

[1] War Cabinet Agendum 105/1943.

[2] Defence Committee, 17 Jul 1942.

[3] Defence Committee 150/1942, meeting 26 Oct, and War Cabinet Minute 2449, 28 Oct. The Defence Committee's view was reproduced verbatim in a Ministerial press statement on 2 Nov 1942.

The dock was a vexed question and Home Security was to be asked to speed up plans to minimise glare from the floodlights.[4]

The notion of relaxing the precautions persisted. In December the War Cabinet approved the Defence Committee's recommendations that in the areas south of Port Macquarie in the eastern States, in South Australia and Tasmania generally, and in Western Australia both Government and private undertakings need not proceed with preparations to enable production to be maintained in a black-out, and where such preparations had been completed they could be modified to permit work to be done by natural light and to ensure proper ventilation; ability to impose a black-out at short notice should be retained.[5]

Henceforward the importance of civil defence receded. Activities begun as the result of the August conference continued: a gas identification service was inaugurated in Melbourne in August 1942 under a university professor, and chemists were chosen and trained at the army school of chemical warfare. The Minister for Home Security announced on 28th October special schools of instruction, and the preparation and issue of standard text-books as the "keynote of a big drive to maintain and improve the efficiency of civil defence workers".[6] A school for instruction in aircraft recognition and bombing tactics began in Sydney on 7th December. This "did not mean that raid spotting would be introduced in Australia immediately but the training of personnel ensures that if the situation in the future demands the institution of raid spotting, it could be introduced with a minimum of delay". An A.R.P. animal first aid service was established in Victoria under an order of 21st January 1943; although headed by a director and deputy-director it achieved little for volunteers were difficult to obtain and training was discontinued. In South Australia the Civilian Welfare Bureau set up to deal "with human problems arising from evacuation and dislocation of home and family life" turned its efforts to the provision of a housekeeper service to aid families where the mother had gone to hospital. The fire-watching service was discontinued in South Australia, except at Port Adelaide, on 25th July 1942. In Tasmania the last A.R.P. test was in March 1943.

Official statements continued to stress the importance of A.R.P. but there were reports of resignations, and in Sydney there was an official reduction in the manning of posts in October. Mr Heffron announced that he had done this on the understanding that personnel could be called quickly in an emergency; the relaxation would relieve wardens of tedium and give them more time at home and to themselves. Tests continued to be held—in Hobart in November, in Melbourne in December. In April 1943 the Department of Home Security returned to the questions of shelter

[4] War Cabinet Minute 2451, 28 Oct.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 2550, 17 Dec 1942.
[6] But the next day he agreed to the suggestion of the Premier of Victoria that speed limits might be varied. Brown-out speed limits operating between sunset and sunrise had been:
Queensland: 20 m.p.h. (15 m.p.h. in streets where public shelters were provided)
New South Wales: 20 m.p.h.
Western Australia: 20 m.p.h.
Tasmania: 20 m.p.h. in city area (30 m.p.h. elsewhere)
South Australia: 25 m.p.h.

protection and protection of vital plant which had been held in abeyance. The Defence Committee and the War Cabinet endorsed the view that the embargo should refer to construction only and that planning might proceed.[7] Ministerial statements from Home Security continued to stress "the danger of complacency".[8] But in June 1943, after the Prime Minister's statement that the danger of actual invasion had passed, the Minister commented that the question of lifting restrictions was a matter for the Defence Commitee.

In April 1944 the committee ruled that the "strategical situation no longer makes necessary the retention as a civil defence measure of protective works such as the interior strengthening of buildings in eastern Australia south of 20 degrees latitude", and recommended that the civil defence organisation should not be disbanded but that a nucleus should be retained, capable of rapid expansion should an emergency require it. The committee was asked to clarify its reference to protective works because "any wholesale demolition of protective measures would affect the public morale and not be in the best interests of the war effort and would render difficult the retention of the interest of personnel of the nucleus organisation" it sought to retain.

The War Cabinet ruled that protective measures might be removed where need existed for space for "any work directly associated with the war effort" or for natural light and ventilation. Trench shelters and outside shelters consisting of timber or galvanised steel sheeting filled with earth might be demolished if there were demands for the material for construction, or where they were a nuisance or source of danger. Authority for such work would be required under the National Security Building Operations regulations. Brick and reinforced concrete pill-box shelters should not be demolished nor should the main splinter-proof walling at bulk oil installations be dismantled.[9]

Six months later, "in view of air superiority and the advance to the Philippines", the Defence Committee's views were that the necessity for maintaining the civil defence organisation on an active basis no longer existed and it should be placed on a reserve basis so that it could be called up, receive refresher training and be ready to operate in a period of one month.[1] This required the maintenance of a small central full-time staff to prepare and keep up-to-date detailed plans, and the maintenance of a part-time local organisation as required to maintain records of personnel who had been trained. The need for a public warning system no longer existed.

The Minister for Home Security was extremely doubtful whether volun-

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[7] War Cabinet Minute 2740, 6 Apr 1943.

[8] On 16th and 31st December 1942 and 6th January 1943. On 19th January the Minister estimated that there were 321,000 civil defence workers in Australia, including 32,205 in Commonwealth establishments:

New South Wales	109,652	South Australia	29,350
Victoria	73,000	Western Australia	13,000
Queensland	50,000	Tasmania	13,793

[9] War Cabinet Minute 3619, 29 Jun 1944.

[1] War Cabinet Minutes 3966 and 3967, 15 Dec 1944.

teer civil defence personnel placed on reserve could be called up and trained, or that the public warning system once dismantled could be restored in the period of "one month" stipulated by the Defence Committee. However, in view of the existing strategical situation, he considered that a "reasonable period of warning of deterioration in the war situation" might reasonably be expected. The War Cabinet approved the Defence Committee's direction about civil defence and added: "All personal equipment such as steel helmets and respirators on issue to Civil Defence personnel are to be returned." In Queensland the Premier had questioned the earlier restriction on the demolition of concrete shelters and had been told that there could be no objection to demolition in streets where they were considered a source of danger to traffic or "a menace to public health". The War Cabinet now approved sending advice to the Premiers that, in view of the war situation, it had become unnecessary to retain air raid shelters or protective work in any part of the Australian mainland, but Darwin was to remain under military direction.[2]

Subsequent decisions[3] reaffirmed the decision on warning systems (the New South Wales Premier had argued that if submarine attacks were still possible the warning system was the only method of securing a black-out at short notice); and directed that there was no need to maintain any lighting restrictions in areas not under military control, and in particular it was not necessary to retain arrangements to impose a black-out. (By this time, however, restrictions on lighting were in force for other reasons: shortage of coal had demanded them.) And the Commonwealth had begun arguing with the oil companies about the cost of demolition of protective walls and repainting.

Within the States the disbanding of their organisations had been gradual before it became official. Civil Defence Day held on 4th September 1943 had been part of the Department of Home Security's campaign to keep interest alive. But there was as much emphasis on the funds for charity available from entrance money as on the efficiency of the display. Firefighters helped with bushfires in most States. In Victoria a final parade of 1,000 was held on 14th November before the organisation was finally disbanded on 31st December 1944. In New South Wales the Director, reporting in June 1944, said that for the past 18 months the department had been "gradually tapering off the activities of National Emergency Services"; the Civilian War Emergency Aid Service ended in August 1944.

Civil defence was remarkable because it was entirely voluntary. When the initial enthusiasm waned it was understandable and it waned less in some sections than in others. Wardens spent time waiting in case of an emergency; while there was some chance of an emergency there seemed to be some point in the work; when the likelihood of an emergency faded —and it seems possible that the likelihood faded earlier in the public than in the official mind—manning a post would appear pointless waste of time. Training was one aid to enthusiasm, but with wardens training

[2] War Cabinet Minute 4016, 24 Jan 1945.
[3] War Cabinet Minutes 4103 of 20 Mar and 4171 of 1 May 1945.

had always to be "simulated". Fire-fighters could and did help with actual fires. Even first aid might, on occasions, be used outside the civil defence duties of the volunteer, but for actual A.R.P. officers even casualties were "simulated". That perhaps is the answer to all criticism. Fortunately for Australia the organisation never had to undergo the test of a period of prolonged raids such as occurred in Britain. Real attack would probably have welded the organisations as no amount of official exhortation could; real attack would no doubt have revealed the defects, but under its imperious demands those defects would probably quickly have been remedied. Signs of this make-believe world, in contrast to the conditions which would have existed had actual attacks been experienced, were everywhere to be seen from the middle of 1942 onwards: sandbags growing fine crops of grass; concrete shelters unclean and uninviting; trenches caved-in or cracked; rusted fire buckets and unused equipment. Even the equipment bought by the well-meaning had yet to be proven: the overweight shovel and the buckets of sand too heavy for a housewife. And as the emergency for which it was bought receded it was put out of the way.

The official exhortation to return equipment was followed up, but there were often difficulties in finding someone to accept responsibility for collecting it; piles of undistributed stirrup pumps and steel helmets found their way to the Disposals Commission, but equally many became household gardening sprays or the playthings of children.

APPENDIX 2

CIVILIAN WARTIME EXPERIENCE IN THE TERRITORIES OF PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA

By A. J. SWEETING

IN 1941 Australians in general knew far more about countries half a world away than they did about the Territories of Papua and New Guinea to their immediate north. This island chain, soon to become a bulwark of Australia's defence, to the average mainlander was a remote country, peopled by bearded missionaries, miners and patrol officers and by whisky-swilling planters and traders who made a handsome livelihood out of exploiting the indigenous population; if the European did not die there of drink or disease, he was equally likely to die of the spear. With Japan's attack this outlook was radically changed. New Guinea and Papua became Australia's front door, with the enemy knocking hard upon it. Hardly an Australian home was left untouched by events taking place there. Tiny hitherto unknown villages were soon to become household names, and in time to take their place in military history with other famed places where Australians had fought and died.

The New Guinea territory, first to come under Japanese attack, included that part of the main island of New Guinea east of the Dutch New Guinea border (excluding Papua), New Britain and the arc of islands extending south-east from Manus through New Ireland to Bougainville in the Solomon Islands. Formerly a German colony, it had been administered by Australia under a mandate from the League of Nations since 1920. Papua, the south-east portion of the New Guinea mainland, had been an Australian possession since 1906. Administration was separate but similarly constituted in each territory. New Guinea was divided into seven districts, Papua into nine, each district under a district officer or resident magistrate assisted by patrol officers.

The size and physical difficulties of both territories and the relative slenderness of Australian resources had combined to prevent the whole area being brought under effective control. By 1939, for example, less than half the Mandated Territory was officially classified as "under control", about 18,000 square miles were considered to be "under influence", and some 5,500 square miles were classed as having been "penetrated by patrols". Exploration and the spread of influence, however, were being persistently extended by officers of the administration.

In New Guinea in June 1941 the European population numbered 4,100 of whom about 400 were employed in the Administration. Some 600 were serving as missionaries or on mission stations, about half this number being of German descent. There were 2,200 Chinese, and an enumerated native population of about 685,000. About 34,000 natives were employed on contract, more than half of them on plantations. In Papua Europeans

numbered 3,070 and the native population was estimated at 300,000 of whom about 20,000 were in employment, 17,000 under contract of service. Ships regularly visited the islands on their way to and from other Pacific trading centres, and the use of aircraft as a means of transport within the territories had been developed to a degree probably unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

Rabaul, at the north-eastern tip of New Britain, capital of the New Guinea territory since the beginning of the twentieth century, lay round the northern shores of spacious Simpson Harbour. It comprised a European town of bungalows and a few larger buildings and offices, set in tree-lined streets, and a Chinatown of crowded galvanised-iron shacks and shops. The population in 1941 consisted of about 1,000 Europeans, 700 Asians and 3,000 natives. Since May 1937 when the town had been overwhelmed by ashes and dust from a volcanic eruption, a change in the site of the capital had been under consideration. The most favoured alternatives were Lae and Salamaua on the New Guinea mainland.

A decision, slow in coming, was accelerated by volcanic activity which recurred in June 1941. This continued for some months, culminating in the biggest blows of all on 19th November, when hot rocks were hurled into Matupi Harbour, more than 100 yards from the foot of the volcano. South-easterly winds carried across the township clouds of pumice and choking sulphur fumes, which settled on desks and documents, irritated eyes and throats and blackened and corroded metal. On 4th September the Minister for External Territories recommended that the Administration be removed from Rabaul and next day Cabinet agreed that Lae, though it lacked a good port, should be the site of the new capital.[1]

The transfer began in October 1941 when the Department of District Services and Native Affairs moved to Salamaua, preparatory to moving to Lae as accommodation became available. The Department of Lands, Surveys and Forests went direct to Lae, and a small section of the Department of Works also moved there to prepare for the arrival of other departments. Brigadier-General Sir Walter McNicoll,[2] who had held the appointment of Administrator since 1934, arrived on 24th November, leaving the Government Secretary, H. H. Page, as Deputy Administrator. McNicoll revisited Rabaul in December and gave instructions for the remaining departments to transfer to Lae as soon as transport became available. They were to leave Rabaul in the steamer *Macdhui* due to sail thence on 21st January.[3] It was not clear what the rest of the town would do. In 1937 the official view had been that "other interests" would remain. In 1941 it seemed likely that business firms would move to Kokopo and,

[1] The New Guinea Branch of the Australian Labour Party disagreed with the choice of Lae and urged Port Moresby as the only "practicable solution". The branch consistently advocated a policy of "amalgamation with the Papuan Administration". (Before the war the two Administrations had operated to a great extent in isolation from each other, and there was insufficient contact between the Territories.)

[2] Brig-General Sir Walter McNicoll, KBE, CB, CMG, DSO. (1st AIF: CO 6 Bn; comd 10 Inf Bde 1916-18.) MHR 1931-34; Administrator of Mandated Territory of New Guinea 1934-42. B. South Melbourne, 27 May 1877. Died 26 Dec 1947.

[3] S. A. Lonergan, Assistant Government Secretary, in report dated 8 Feb 1942 (on Territories file DD 16/2/1).

as that new centre developed, some administrative services would need to be represented there.

For 20 years Australia had adhered to the terms of the Mandate, which required that no military or naval bases and no fortifications should be established in the New Guinea territory, and prohibited the military training of natives for other than internal police work and local defence. The New Guinea police force commanded by a superintendent consisted of European commissioned and warrant officers, and native non-commissioned officers and constables.[4] The strength of the native constabulary in June 1941 was 1,200; in December about 350 were stationed in the Rabaul area under the acting Superintendent, W. B. Ball.

In December 1940 German raiders had attacked Nauru, sinking five ships and shelling the phosphate loading plant. Protective measures were plainly needed, and on 18th February 1941 the Australian War Cabinet authorised the dispatch to Rabaul of an A.I.F. battalion and the installation of coast defences. The question of raising a native battalion was also to be examined.[5] It was estimated that with the locally raised New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, the native police and proposed additions, the equivalent of about an infantry brigade, plus coast defences "would be provided in the New Guinea (Mandate), mainly around Rabaul".

Although expectations far exceeded results, rapid action followed. In March-April the 2/22nd Battalion of the A.I.F. arrived at Rabaul, and before the end of the year a coastal battery of two 6-inch guns and searchlights was established there. With other small military detachments, including an anti-aircraft battery of two guns, the ultimate strength of the garrison reached about 1,400—a token force perched in the probable path of any Japanese advance.

Returned soldiers played a leading part in establishing the Rabaul detachment of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, and for a time the headquarters of the unit was at Rabaul. Enthusiasm dwindled, however, as members of the N.G.V.R. volunteered for service overseas and numbers decreased; by the end of 1941 only about 80 men at Rabaul were regularly attending training parades.

An Inter-Services Committee, with the Government Secretary, Page, as Chairman, and representatives of the Services and the Chief Civil Warden,[6] drew up an Air Raids Precautions plan. The detailed instructions issued in June specified a general refuge area in a valley on Namanula Ridge. They urged that, since sufficient warning might not be received to allow civilians to reach the area before the commencement of an attack, each householder should construct trenches or select drains in which members of his household could take shelter in the event of sudden attack. Air raid signals were notified, wardens appointed and first aid posts selected. A register of privately-owned motor vehicles was drawn up, school children were drilled in escape from school buildings, and arrangements were made

[4] ADO's and Patrol Officers were ex-officio Inspectors and sub-Inspectors respectively.
[5] War Cabinet Minute 816, 18 Feb 1941.
[6] R. L. Clark, a member of the Legislative Council and President of the New Guinea Returned Soldiers League.

to cut off the town electricity supply in the event of night raids. Rather surprisingly, considering the circumstances, the instructions seem to have attempted to preserve the existing racial and social structure of the Rabaul community. "The upper portion of the valley is reserved for Europeans, and the lower portion for Asiatics," ran the instructions. "A smaller valley immediately south of the European section is reserved for native servants." The A.R.P. plan stated that "no special instructions have been issued to natives".

Apprehension about the presence of women and children in the territory increased after the first enemy reconnaissance plane appeared over Rabaul on 10th December. Successive Governments, unwilling to grasp the nettle, had sought to encourage rather than to order their evacuation, which was to be done "as unobtrusively as possible to avoid panic"[7]—a fear frequently uppermost in the minds of politicians of all parties. There was some limited response to this and later moves, but as time went by the evacuees, made lonely by the absence of loved ones, began to exert pressure to be allowed to return. On 17th November the War Cabinet decided that further encouragement to voluntary evacuation was needed, and issued a warning that in the event of war it would not be possible to make any special arrangements to transfer women and children to Australia. Permits were no longer to be issued to tourists.

On 11th December, the day after the first enemy reconnaissance plane appeared over Rabaul, the War Cabinet confirmed a decision made three days earlier that there should not yet be any compulsory evacuation of women and children from Papua and New Guinea, but next day reversed its decision. The evacuation, in accordance with a plan already drawn up, was virtually completed by 29th December when 592 women and children from Papua, and 1,210 from New Guinea had arrived in Australia. Nevertheless a number of women (other than nurses[8] and missionaries to whom the orders did not apply) still remained. Despite the lateness of the hour, however, the evacuation had proceeded smoothly, and no bombs had fallen on Rabaul before the bulk of the women and children had departed.

Paralleling the army build-up, there had been some slight development in air force strength at Rabaul. By the beginning of January 1942 the R.A.A.F. was manning two airfields—one at Lakunai on the northern arm of Blanche Bay, between the town and Praed Point, and the other at Vunakanau, south of the Bay—and four Hudson aircraft and ten Wirraways were stationed there. Aircraft spare parts and ammunition, however, were in short supply, servicing facilities were inadequate, and the Wirraway was a trainer rather than a fighter aircraft, of whose defects their pilots were only too well aware.

A disturbing picture of civil affairs in Rabaul was provided by air force reports.

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[7] War Cabinet Minute 904, 18 Mar 1941.

[8] Dr E. T. Brennan, the Director of Health at Rabaul, decided that seven nurses employed by the New Guinea administration came within the "essential" category, but at the direction of the Government Secretary, made it clear to them that if they wished they also could leave the territory. Only one elected to do so.

Works and operations were continually delayed and hampered because of the lack of control of civilian personnel and activities (stated one account). Signals requesting the imposition of martial law brought no response, nor were senior administrative officials in the civilian service given satisfactory directions or special authority by Canberra. The lack of control over native labour caused the loss of valuable government equipment which could not be replaced . . . equipment which should have been available to the three services was being used by civilian personnel in carrying out their normal trading and commercial avocations. . . .

Suspected fifth column activity also caused considerable concern. It was found impossible to secure any control over civilian personnel visiting the aerodrome. As numerous enemy aliens, principally Germans, were not interned and appeared to have a free run of the town, R.A.A.F. officers in control became satisfied that a considerable amount of information was being passed to the enemy. Definite cases of jamming began to occur on WT operational wave-lengths.[9]

The first raid on the territories came about 10.30 on the morning of 4th January. As the sirens at Rabaul wailed their warnings, servicemen and civilians alike hastened to shelter in nearby gulleys, drains and slit trenches. Thence, far out to sea over Watom Island, they saw the aircraft approaching—18 heavy long-range bombers, in perfect arrowhead formation, "flashing silver in the bright sunlight". "It seemed impossible to believe that they were bent on destruction, so serene and beautiful did they look," wrote one observer.[1]

The aircraft pattern-bombed Lakunai, dropping more than 50 bombs from a great height, but only three hit the runway, the earth at one end erupting in a swirling brown column as the salvo fell across it. There was a muffled roar of more explosions as 17 bombs fell in the native compound, killing 15 people and wounding as many more. The rest fell harmlessly in the sea. Two Wirraways which took off from Lakunai failed to intercept the raiders; anti-aircraft shells burst in white puffs far below them. In the early evening of the same day about 11 flying boats made two runs over the Vunakanau airfield. One pattern of bombs straddled the end of the strip, but the others fell wide of it. Another native was killed.

Between 6th and 16th January three more raids by aircraft flying at high levels occurred.[2] They concentrated on the air force and military installations, avoiding the town and port facilities, giving rise to the belief that landings were imminent and that these facilities were being preserved for the enemy's own use. On the 8th the *Malatai* left Rabaul, having embarked all Japanese internees from the territory and a number of medically boarded soldiers. Since the outbreak of the European war a curfew had been imposed on enemy aliens—usually German or Austrian missionaries—restricting them to their quarters between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. No additional restrictions were imposed after December 1941. Instructions issued by the Chiefs of Staff to prepare the airfields

[9] RAAF narrative, "New Guinea Campaign", Vol 1, pp. 62, 71.

[1] D. M. Selby in *Hell and High Fever* (1956), p. 15. Selby commanded the anti-aircraft battery.

[2] During the initial raids there was lack of co-ordination between the services, civil police and the A.R.P. organisation which resulted in air raid signals being sounded independently, or sometimes not at all. The number of sirens—five in all—their limited range and the time-lag in passing warning messages, sometimes by police boys on foot, to the various posts heightened the feeling of uncertainty. On 5th January, after the first raid, the Government Secretary cabled Canberra for an air raid siren with a range of four miles. An electrically-operated siren was needed since no steam was available at Rabaul. None was forthcoming within the limited time available.

for last-minute demolition in the event of invasion added to the prevailing anxiety.[3] Rabaul, rightly, saw itself in the direct path of the Japanese advance. For a week before the Japanese arrived—at the New Guinea Club (headquarters of the A.R.P.) and other places where the almost entirely male population gathered—the prospect of invasion was common talk. Rabaul, in the words of one civilian "became a typical frontier town, dropping any semblance of social life, and facing, without subterfuge, the grim possibilities of front-line warfare".[4]

There was a swift lowering of spirits among the Asians. On 24th December the Chinese telephonists ceased work. On 14th January the Government Secretary reported to Canberra that the morale of Chinese artisans was so low that they could no longer be depended upon to carry out urgent works required for defence purposes. Page suggested the provision from the services of a fully equipped engineer unit.

On 15th January, convinced that an early attempt at a Japanese landing could be expected, Page telegraphed Canberra:

> It now appears that the defence policy for the territory is to be limited to demonstration of force rather than any serious attempt to hold the territory against any enemy attack in force and there are indications that such an attack will take place in the very near future. For these reasons it is considered urgent that consideration should be given to the position of civil population of the territory and if necessary their evacuation. The Administrator at present very ill at Lae and it is not practicable to confer with him prior to dispatch of this telegram but the position is regarded as sufficiently serious to warrant representations for immediate consideration of the Minister and/or War Cabinet.
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> My personal view is that no good purpose can be served by the Administration maintaining officers at island locations including Rabaul if the only prospect is internment on enemy occupation which might be effected in a matter only of days. It is pointed out that dependants of civil officers retained by the Administration and ultimately interned by the enemy have no claim for protection or financial assistance from the Government as is the case with dependants of soldiers.[5] I would be glad to receive the observations of the Minister for transmission to the Administrator as to the policy it is desired to adopt in regard to civilians and withdrawal temporarily of all civil administrative officers to the mainland or if considered necessary to Australia. The civil population is looking to the Administration for some indication of the action to be taken by them.

Page's message was submitted to the Prime Minister, and on the 17th Canberra notified Page that:

> The Chiefs of Staff are considering proposals . . . and the matter will be considered by War Cabinet on Monday, 19th January.[6]
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> Not possible to anticipate decision. Please supply information as to the number of persons it is desired to evacuate.
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> Chiefs of Staff emphasise it is important that all Government officials should remain at their posts until directed to leave.

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[3] Similar instructions were issued to Kavieng and Port Moresby. Chiefs of Staff Report, No. 101, 3 Jan 1942.

[4] Gordon Thomas, "In Rabaul, Under the Japs" (*Pacific Islands Year Book*, 1950, p. 30).

[5] This was afterwards remedied by the New Guinea Civilian War Pensions scheme.

[6] War Cabinet had last met in Melbourne on the 13th. Its next meeting was also to be in Melbourne.

When Page's telegram of the 15th was sent the Norwegian freighter, *Herstein*, a 5,000-ton motor vessel easily capable of taking out the remaining civilians, was in Rabaul discharging cargo. In accordance with instructions from the Copra Marketing Board she began loading copra over the weekend during which Page's proposals lay awaiting consideration in Melbourne. Once that highly inflammable cargo was taken aboard the danger of using the ship to remove civilians was greatly increased. Reports by survivors suggest that Page had in view the use of the *Herstein* to evacuate all the civilians.[7] Others vessels also were available, even up to the day preceding the invasion.[8] Shipping was not lacking; what was lacking was a clear and prompt direction from the Government.[9]

On the 20th a message was drafted in Canberra indicating that the War Cabinet had approved the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff that it was "undesirable" that any unnecessary civilian personnel should remain in Rabaul and the adjacent islands and that such people should be evacuated as and when transport became available. The Government asked to be informed of the "numbers of civil population that could advantageously be evacuated", but stressed that it was important that civil administration of the territories controlled by Australia should be maintained for as long as was necessary and possible; the withdrawal of administrative officers so long as there was work for them to do was deprecated. This final injunction, repeating that of the 17th, seems unrealistic so far as Rabaul was concerned. As noted earlier, the New Guinea Administration planned to close at Rabaul and complete the evacuation of its officers to Lae on 21st January. The decision to advance the date by a few days was surely only an administrative one that might well have been handled within the department after consultation with the Minister.[1]

On 20th January Rabaul was attacked by the largest number of aircraft assembled by the Japanese in 1942 for a single attack against a target in the Australian territories outside the mainland.[2] Soon after midday Rabaul was warned by a coastwatcher on Tabar Island that 20 enemy aircraft

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[7] Gordon Thomas, editor of the *Rabaul Times* (in an account published in the *Cairns Post*, 17 Oct 1945); and S. A. Lonergan, Assistant Government Secretary, who had left Rabaul for Lae on 17th January, in his evidence at the military Court of Inquiry. This Court of Inquiry assembled on 13 May 1942, by order of Major-General V. P. H. Stantke, the Adjutant-General, to inquire into and report on the landing of Japanese forces in New Britain, Timor and Ambon (including the circumstances of the massacre at Tol). Much of the information in the section of this narrative relating to Rabaul has been drawn either from Volume II (*Evidence re New Britain*) or from statements filed with the war diary of the 2/22nd Battalion at the Australian War Memorial. Files of the former Department of External Territories have also been consulted. The narrative has benefited from the comment and assistance of a number of people who were present but whose experiences did not then or later form the subject of diaries or reports.

[8] The last sizeable sea transport that offered was the *Matafele* (330 tons) which arrived at Rabaul on 21st January. She left at 4 p.m. next day, taking with her as passengers Judge Bathgate, a member of the audit staff and others. Many more might have accompanied them.

[9] Gordon Thomas wrote afterwards that "the reason why more civilians did not avail themselves of these opportunities of escape was through total lack of information as to enemy dispositions; a total ignorance of what form the invasion would take and from which direction it would come. Sea travel at that time, with constant air raids in progress, seemed fraught with greater danger than remaining in Rabaul." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 Dec 1945 .

[1] The message drafted in Canberra on the 20th never reached Rabaul, although the AWA station at Rabaul, which normally handled civilian radio traffic, continued to operate until the afternoon of the 22nd. It reached Lae, on the morning of the 21st, but had only been partly deciphered when the Japanese attacked that town.

[2] Probably 120, including fighters. The Japanese mounted their largest attack against a territories target on 12th April 1943 when 43 bombers and about 131 fighters struck at the Port Moresby airfields.

were headed towards the town. A further formation of 33 approaching from the west was not detected until it was over Rabaul at 12.40. A few minutes later another 50 aircraft were over Duke of York Island. The watchers on the ground looked up in tense expectancy as two Wirraways on patrol turned to meet the enemy. One Wirraway, engaged by more than six Zeros, went down in flames; the other went into a spin after a brief one-sided combat and crash-landed. Other Wirraways, "whose gallantry is a lasting memory to those of us who saw the sacrifice",[3] took the air but, outgunned, outmanoeuvred and outpaced, were shot down. Within minutes the air was clear of opposition and the Japanese were free to deliver leisurely high-level bombing attacks against shipping, wharves, airfields and other objectives. Giving a daunting display of superiority, heavy bombers, flying boats and seaplanes patrolled in pageant formation while Zero fighters swept down to attack wharves and military encampments or performed impudent aerobatics. The ground shook and trembled under the bombardment.

Two of my boys beat it for the bush (wrote an eyewitness[4] afterwards) but Isa, our Nakanai cook, remained by his trench and just before the fireworks started I called him over to my dugout for company. Both of us were too proud to show how frightened we were, but I could see Isa's knees shaking with the noise and hear the rustle of the kunai grass as the bomb-blast waves swept through, and the chatter of machine-guns as the fighters strafed or let go at our gallant Wirraways overhead. Our ack-ack guns, manned by young militia lads, had a merry time and were credited with a couple of Japs. The Norwegian ack-ack crew also did a grand job, but their gun was knocked out and eleven seamen were killed.

The raid lasted three-quarters of an hour. At its end the *Herstein* was ablaze in the harbour, the hulk *Westralia* had been sunk and a Japanese heavy bomber, brought down by anti-aircraft fire, was smouldering against the largest of the volcanic cones flanking Rabaul to the east. Only three aircraft remained undamaged. That afternoon these were concentrated at Vunakanau, and the air force handed over Lakunai to the army for demolition. The N.G.V.R. were called to parade at 5 p.m. in the Botanic Gardens, and told "to hop home, have a feed and parade again with full kit at 6 p.m." On return most of them were attached to the company of the 2/22nd Battalion at Lakunai.

There was a lull on the 21st in the air attacks on Rabaul, but early that morning the army intercepted a message from a flying boat that four enemy cruisers were 65 miles south-west of Kavieng, heading towards Rabaul. The military commander decided that the cruisers could be expected to arrive at Rabaul that night and ordered that the army camp at Malaguna, which was in an exposed position along the foreshore of Simpson Harbour, should be evacuated. Two Wirraways left for Lae that day and the remaining aircraft—a Hudson, carrying the wounded—took off before daylight next morning. On the 21st the remaining members of the air force set out for pre-arranged extrication points on the south coast.

[3] Gordon Thomas, in *Pacific Islands Year Book*, 1950, p. 30.
[4] B. G. Challis, in *Stand-To*, Oct-Dec 1966, p. 3.

Late that night all civilians had either taken shelter in Refuge Gully or left the township by car for distant plantations. The bulk store of bank notes was destroyed by the manager of the Commonwealth Bank. Next morning the Chief Warden was advised that the threatened attack had proved a false alarm and that civilians should "carry on with normal duties". Between 7.20 and 8.15 a force of 45 aircraft launched the enemy's pre-invasion air attack. They machine-gunned Vunakanau airfield, and then dive-bombed and silenced the 6-inch fixed gun defences at Praed Point.

The Deputy Administrator and the Treasurer (H. O. Townsend[5]) left Rabaul for Kokopo after the raid.

During the 22nd more left for Kokopo; in the early afternoon the remaining civilians again collected in Refuge Gully. Though dejected, there was no panic among them, only confusion and uncertainty. About 2 p.m. soldiers came to the car park and commandeered a number of civilian cars. These, together with two ambulances, were used to clear the civil and military hospitals of the sick and wounded, who were accompanied by the service and civilian nurses to Vunapope Mission. Seeking instructions the Chief Warden attempted to telephone the military commander in Rabaul, but the line was silent. The Japanese convoy of 11 ships, steering south-west, was now visible on the horizon. The army abandoned Lakunai that afternoon, demolished the aerodrome, and concentrated south of the harbour. In a borrowed car, A. J. Gaskin, a hotelkeeper and Secretary of the Rabaul R.S.L., toured the almost deserted town. Government and commercial stores and the shed on Government Wharf, packed with cargo brought in by the *Herstein*, were still intact, he said later. "A bomb, believed to have been . . . time-delayed . . . had burst on the southern half of the Malaguna Road between battalion headquarters and Anzac House, and near where three stacks of aircraft bombs had been placed. . . . The crater was about 25 feet across by 8 feet deep and . . . had caused considerable damage to the Administration residences between battalion headquarters and Anzac House. The eastern wall of Anzac House had been blown in and the building generally had sustained other damage."

Most of the wardens left for Kokopo about 4.30 p.m. After their departure about 30 Europeans, a dozen or so native servants who would not leave their masters, and some 200 Asian men, women and children gathered in quiet, cheerless groups in Refuge Gully. One of the Chief Warden's duties was to issue a clearance certificate to the *Matafele* which, as mentioned earlier, left Rabaul at 4 o'clock, her departure cloaked by blinding rain.

The New Guinea Constabulary also left Rabaul that afternoon accompanied by their European warrant-officers. One group of about 300 went to Toma where, next morning, the Europeans had "a devil of a job stopping the native police from making an attack" on the Japanese. The rifles and ammunition were buried and the police dispersed because of lack of food.[6]

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[5] H. O. Townsend, OBE. (1st AIF: Capt 1 Anzac HQ.) Treasurer NG Administration 1922-42. B. Brunswick, Vic, 8 Oct 1892. Lost in sinking of *Montevideo Maru*, 1 Jul 1942.

[6] Warrant-Officer A. M. Sinclair in evidence before the army Court of Inquiry.

Another group led by four European warrant-officers and accompanied by 90-100 native prisoners went to Vunakanau, where the native police were ordered to take provisions and lead the prisoners into the bush. "If we held Rabaul I intended to have the prisoners brought back again," a warrant-officer said later. Next day they met the prisoners at Malabunga, now burdened with provisions that civilians had given them to carry. The civilians joined the police officers, making their way on foot across the Bainings. That night the native prisoners, together with the native police, "cleared out with most of our stores".[7]

Rabaul's hour had now arrived. An eyewitness account of the Japanese invasion, written soon afterwards by N. H. Fisher,[8] Government geologist and vulcanologist of Rabaul, is typical of the experiences shared by many New Guinea citizens or soldiers of only the briefest standing. Fisher had paraded with the N.G.V.R. on 20th January.

After destruction of Praed Point battery, defence of lower drome was abandoned, drome mined, Rabaul evacuated, stocks of petrol and bombs destroyed (he wrote succinctly). NGVR gun teams and mortars of "A" Company (2/22 Bn) and some of anti-tank personnel transferred to beach defence positions between Malaguna and Vulcan. Task of two Vickers and mortar team to cover road from Rabaul and bring fire to bear in vicinity of Catholic Church, some 500 yards on Rabaul side of New Road turn-off. Mortar, of which I was in charge, with team of three other men only, accordingly set up on beach 300 yards past New Road turn-off.

Action commenced at 2.40 a.m. Friday, 23.1.42, following bright flare at 2.15 a.m. Japanese attempted landing on beach immediately on Rabaul side of Vulcan. No. 1 Section, "A" Company, stationed 300 yards from Vulcan, 200 yards from beach, were first into action, immediately followed by machine-gun and mortar fire which continued sporadically until after sunrise. Japanese were repulsed by No. 1 and 2 Sections "A" Company, and moved across foot of Vulcan in westerly direction. Fire was later heard from No. 8 Platoon stationed farther along than No. 1 and 2 Sections "A" Company, but whether against this landing party or against other Japanese forces moving around from southern side of Vulcan is not known. Wire barricade in front of No. 1 Section was to some extent effective and Japanese casualties from mortars and machine-gun fire before reaching this wire are reported to have been heavy. . . . Japanese landing during the night were lightly clad in dark-coloured singlet and shorts, carried small bore Tommy-guns and light machine-guns. . . .

At 4 a.m. a green flare was sent up to a height of about 1,000 feet over Rabaul and this appears to have been signal for general action by Japanese. Immediately afterwards a Japanese (presumably) launch was seen to leave the vicinity of the Burnt Wharf (Customs House) and proceed out along the eastern side of the harbour, proving that the Japanese had established some contact in town of Rabaul by this time. . . . A string of 7 transports was seen approaching the entrance to the harbour from the east, at about half-mile intervals. Transports were not large —all calculated less than 2,000 tons—and proceeded to a point between Raluana and Praed Point, then turned and headed up the harbour. After 3 had turned this corner all suddenly changed course and sent out landing parties, the first towards Malaguna, another effected landings on Matupi Island, the others at Vulcan, Raluana and at least two places on the Kokopo coast. Technique appeared to be to send out small

[7] Warrant-Officer R. W. Feetum in evidence.

[8] Dr N. H. Fisher. Govt Geologist, Mandated Territory of NG 1934-42; Chief Geologist, Bureau of Mineral Resources, Geology and Geophysics 1942-69, Director since 1969. B. Hay, NSW, 30 Sep 1909.

landing parties to locate defence points which were then dive-bombed. One party attempted landing in front of Catholic Church between Vulcan and Malaguna. Consisted of ship's motor launch towing two boats similar in appearance to ordinary life-boats, apparently made of wood. Each boat contained about 20 men. Owing to mortar being trained on this position, with measured distance, the third or fourth bomb landed in the second boat, demolishing it and probably all in it. Several more bombs were landed in the midst of the landing party, which was also being attacked by machine-gun and rifle fire. It was by this time about 6 a.m. and dive bombers of various types made their appearance, some similar to those used in previous day's raid, also small seaplanes with large floats. Defence having been by this time located by enemy as being concentrated between Catholic Church and Vulcan, this area was subjected to intense dive-bombing. Our mortar received a direct hit and was demolished. Landings by this time were effective at Vulcan and Japanese troops were coming around from Rabaul so a party under Lieutenant Archer,[9] NGVR, retreated through bush under constant heavy bombing, found native track and joined the New Road about 1½ miles from beach. One transport was found waiting here, all others from beach positions having gone. After waiting for some time to make sure no more were coming, truck proceeded up to 3-Ways where instructions were received to proceed to Malabunga crossroads, side-tracking Vunakanau aerodrome by detour in convoy. This journey occupied some time, as convoy was subject to repeated dive-bombings. Arrived at Malabunga turn-off where several lorries had already gone down, received instructions to proceed to Toma. Here on advice being received that further resistance was considered useless by the commanding officers, lorries proceeded to end of road, going down on eastern side of Mt Varzin. Transports were here abandoned and personnel proceeded along track which led first to terminus of Malabunga-Rabata road, thence up head of Warangoi River, where Lamingi Mission Station is situated. On this track at least 300 troops were moving by the time I started—about midday—and probably many more came behind.

Meanwhile in Refuge Gully the civilians, though knowing little of events along the beaches, had been warned by the incessant rifle fire and bomb explosions that the Japanese had arrived. Overhead, planes were zooming, and occasional bursts of machine-gun fire raked the hillsides where the civilians were hiding. At daylight a white-flag party, consisting of the Chief Warden, the senior Government official present (Hector E. Robinson) and Gordon Thomas went forward to the town to arrange terms and prevent wandering Japanese patrols from attacking the unarmed civilians. The Japanese looted houses and offices in the town, wantonly destroying property apparently for the mere sake of seeing the wreckage. Many thousands of books in the Agnes Wisdom library and all Government office papers were put in a pile and burnt. Later in the morning all civilians were mustered on the baseball oval where they remained under armed guards until nightfall. Then, foodless and bedless, the Europeans, together with their servants and the Asians who had been rounded up in Refuge Gully, were crowded into Kuomintang Hall in Chinatown. In a small room at the entrance to the hall some 20 A.I.F. prisoners were kept apart from the civilians. The following days were spent unloading the many transports that arrived with the invasion convoy. The numbers of prisoners swelled daily as more civilians and soldiers were brought in from outlying areas. At

[9] Lt J. C. Archer, OBE, NGVR. Administrator of Northern Territory 1956-60. Public servant; of Rabaul; b. Castlemaine, Vic, 28 Jul 1900.

length, when their accommodation became impossible, they were transferred to the camp on Malaguna Road formerly occupied by the Army. At its peak Malaguna housed about 240 civilians, including 110 administrative officials, and about 900 soldiers, including more than 100 intercepted by the Japanese as they attempted to escape from Kavieng.[1]

Occasional Allied air raids broke the monotony and helped lift the prisoners' spirits, but generally the days spent at Malaguna were grim ones, with echoes of Japanese and Axis victories from almost every front.

In June the Japanese shipped 208 civilians and 845 military prisoners from Rabaul in the *Montevideo Maru*. The ship was torpedoed by an American submarine off Luzon in the South China Sea on 1st July. Except for a few Japanese who got ashore, all on board perished. The loss was a tragic one, not only of young life but of a large number of the older men who had been responsible for the development of the Territory in the previous two decades. Later, in July, 60 Australian officers and about 20 women prisoners, including army and civilian nurses, were shipped safely to Japan in the *Naruto Maru*. Very few European civilians (as distinct from missionaries) then remained at Rabaul.[2] Of about a dozen who did so, only four survived—three engineers and a journalist, Thomas—who had been retained by the Japanese to run the Rabaul power house and freezing plant.

After the invasion about 60 civilians made good their escape by following army routes of withdrawal. One such route travelled westwards along the north coast as far as Pondo, where a flotilla of small craft, including canoes, organised by an energetic District Officer, J. K. McCarthy,[3] assisted in ferrying escapers to Iboki. Thence the largest group of escapers (about 200, including 22 civilians) were transferred to Vitu Island, and on 20th March embarked in the motor schooner *Lakatoi* for passage to Australia.

Some who took the alternative south coast route joined the air force and were picked up by flying boat; others got as far as Adler Bay before deciding to surrender; a small group crossed the mountainous country between Wide and Open Bays, led by a civilian timber getter, Frank

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[1] See *Pacific Islands Year Book*, 1950, pp. 31-2 for Gordon Thomas's account of Rabaul during the Japanese occupation.

[2] The Catholic Mission of the Sacred Heart at Vunapope—a predominantly German Mission—became a gathering ground for the New Britain missionaries. Thither many were brought from outer stations by the Japanese. At its peak the strength of the missionaries numbered about 350 including people of 14 nationalities. They remained in occupation of the mission buildings at Vunapope until October 1942 when the Japanese took over and established a 1,500-bed hospital there. The missionaries were moved to a near-by barbed wire compound where they rebuilt their station. In May 1944, after constant air attacks which reduced the mission and every building around it to "matchwood and ashes", the Japanese agreed to allow the missionaries to find another site for the station. For eight weeks they had lived almost entirely in tunnels. They chose Ramala Gorge, "a wild fantastic place . . . torn out of the soft volcanic rock of the Bittagalep Hills", six to seven miles from Kokopo. Beginning with nothing they again rebuilt their station, including an elaborate system of tunnels for protection against the air raids. There, suffering only occasional raids and in "almost pleasant uneventfulness", they remained until the end of the war. About 20 missionaries captured at outer stations in the Mandated Territory were executed for helping Australian servicemen or other reasons. Eleven were Germans. (Detailed accounts of the experiences of the missionaries during this period may be found in *This Crowd Beats Us All* (1960) by Bishop Leo Scharmach, and in *Prisoners Base and Home Again* (1957) by Rev James Benson, an Anglican missionary, captured in Papua and afterwards transferred to Rabaul.)

[3] Lt-Col J. K. McCarthy, CBE. Coastwatcher, Angau and BBCAU 1942-46. District Commissioner, New Britain 1949-54; Director, Dept of District Administration 1960-68; MHA Papua-New Guinea 1964-68. District Officer; of New Britain; b. St Kilda, Vic, 20 Jan 1905.

Holland,[4] and native constables, and took part in the north coast evacuation. Most, however, continued westwards on foot, generally in small separate groups of soldiers or civilians—the civilian frequently revealing discomfort at the presence of soldier. Many paused at Tol and Waitavalo to gather strength for the crossing of the rivers that flow into Henry Reid Bay. The Japanese arrived by sea in landing barges on the morning of 3rd February and accepted the surrender of 22 Australians who awaited them at the beach near Tol under a white flag. At the Tol and Waitavalo Plantation houses were some 70 other troops. No lookouts were posted and these men for the most part were surprised and captured while still asleep or preparing breakfast. That day and early next morning the Japanese combed the area for more escapers, concentrating those captured at the Tol labour quarters.

Early on the morning of the 4th the prisoners were assembled outside the labour quarters and after a preliminary check marched to Tol Plantation house. There the 22 men who had surrendered on the beach were separated. Eight members of the medical corps who indicated their Red Cross brassards to the Japanese had the brassards torn from their arms. Identity discs were then removed from the prisoners, whose names, ranks and numbers were entered in a book. Personal articles, such as paybooks, letters and papers were collected and heaped together. The hands of the prisoners were tied behind their backs with a fine cord, and they were broken up into groups of 9 or 10, in most cases roped together. Accompanied by small escorts these parties were marched in various directions through the plantation. The parties were halted after travelling a short distance and individuals or groups of two or three were cut adrift and led away. Then the sounds of rifle and sub-machine-gun fire, grunted Japanese commands, and the cries of the wounded broke the silence of the bush. Tol became a grim killing ground as men were ruthlessly bayoneted, cut down by the sword or shot. Probably 158 Australians perished.[5] How many were civilians will never be known. Six soldiers, five of whom bore bayonet or bullet wounds, survived the massacre. One survivor bore ten bayonet wounds. Other refugees who passed through the Tol-Waitavalo area in the following days spoke of the stench of death that pervaded the area, of the piles of partly burned equipment and paybooks; of scraps of letters and torn photographs—the nostalgic impedimenta of civilian and soldier alike. The area inspired dread; few lingered to investigate.

Desperately short of food and medicines and their way made harder by the constabulary who, travelling more swiftly than the bulk of the refugees and interpreting too literally instructions to live off the country, looted and pillaged the villages and antagonised their occupants, the bulk of the south coast escapers at length reached Drina, 120 miles to the west. On 10th April about 150, including 21 civilians, were picked up in the

[4] Capt F. Holland, MBE. "Z" Special Unit. Tractor driver and timber getter; of New Britain; b. Enfield, England, 15 Oct 1907.

[5] Estimate of War Graves officers in 1945, after the area had been recaptured by the Australian Army. The original estimate, based on the interrogation of survivors, was 141.

area by the *Laurabada* (captained by the noted explorer Ivan Champion[6]) and taken to Port Moresby. Other groups of enterprising soldiers and civilians salvaged launches or pinnaces and by long and lonely sea voyages made good their escapes, sometimes well after the main evacuations had taken place. Many others might also have escaped had plans been made beforehand for organised evacuation in the event of the inevitable—as seems universally to have been recognised—Japanese invasion and overrunning of Rabaul.

In this respect the civilians were in much the same plight as the servicemen, to whom orders had been issued that it was "every man for himself". Though leaders among the soldiers quickly emerged, their efforts might have been nullified without the local knowledge and enterprise of some outstanding civilians, or servicemen of a few weeks' standing. Many escapers were indebted to the missionaries, most (though not all) of whom stood to their posts and careless of creed, colour or reprisals, fed and sheltered those who passed their way.

Throughout the period soldiers complained of the lack of realism of the civilians, particularly those who remained at their plantations. The civilians were equally critical of the soldiers who, they believed, were running away. In retrospect much of the criticism seems ill-judged. The civilian who remained at his plantation, unwilling perhaps to desert his servants or to put aside his life's work, or the missionary who stayed at his station, hoping to carry on as before, was obedient to principles probably equally as cogent as those of the soldier who believed it his duty to escape in order to fight again.

Meanwhile Kavieng, the administrative centre of the New Ireland District, 140 miles north-west of Rabaul, had also been invaded and the defence force put to flight. The little town, perched on the reef-shored northern tip of elongated New Ireland, had a population in normal times of about 50 Europeans and 250 Chinese. As well as the District Officer and his staff at Kavieng, there was an Assistant District Officer stationed at Namatanai on the south-east coast. The total European population of New Ireland in 1941 was only about 200. Development had all taken place along the coastal areas, and there was an excellent road traversing almost the whole east coast and ending at Kavieng. The road and an airfield added greatly to the importance of Kavieng as a port. Most of the indigenous people lived along the coastline in small family settlements, sometimes only a few yards apart, with a plot of land, clumps of coconut trees and two or three houses.

Kavieng had been heavily attacked by about 60 Japanese aircraft on the morning of 21st January. The aircraft concentrated their attacks on the town and on machine-gun positions on the airfield and along the ridge running laterally to the western beaches.

[6] Lt I. F. Champion, OBE. RANVR. Director, District Services and Native Affairs TPNG 1949-51; Chief Commissioner, Native Land Commission 1952-64. Resident Magistrate; of Misima, Papua; b. Port Moresby, 9 Mar 1904.

The army force defending Kavieng, consisting of an Independent Company numbering about 150 men, claimed to have shot down four aircraft. When the raid was over the picture was the characteristic one of helpless and hopeless Asians and native people barely able to comprehend the disasters that had befallen them. Bombs which fell on the outskirts of Chinatown, with its crowded galvanized-iron dwellings, sent debris raining down over the area and machine-gunning Zeros caused havoc among Asians sheltering there. Dozens of natives, carrying their few possessions, the women with their babies strapped to their backs and the men carrying toddlers, sought to flee the town, the old men and women struggling to keep pace with them. The copra sheds were a blazing inferno.[7]

The District Officer, J. H. McDonald,[8] after consulting the senior army officer, Major Wilson,[9] organised the movement by road of most of the civilians to a camp set up at Kaut, about ten miles south-east of Kavieng. He himself with the District Office staff moved to Kaut by Government pinnace. Soldiers wounded in the air raid were moved to Lemakot Mission and left in the care of Miss Dorothy Maye (a devoted nursing sister of the Kavieng European Hospital)[10] and the Mission nuns. The Independent Company also withdrew to Kaut except for a small group retained at the airfield for demolition purposes.[1] Early on the morning of the 23rd, almost simultaneously with Rabaul, Japanese marines made an unopposed landing at Kavieng. Major Wilson and six civilians who had gone back to Kavieng for food and drink and passed the night there witnessed the landing. A biographer of one of the civilians (Murray[2]) wrote later:

> Machine-gun fire was coming from all directions. All along the shore coloured flares were rising into the air; red, blue, green and yellow Very lights illuminated the sky. A burst of gunfire hit close to the house and as Murray looked into the half light dozens of white objects seemed to be running towards him, firing wildly as they came. He realized that the white objects were sandshoes. . . . The Japs were coming! There was no time to say more than "Quick Jackie, over the hedge!" [to his native boy]. They . . . got to their feet and ran. Jackie cleared the hedge . . . Murray plunged straight through it. He kept on running through the coconut palms and light bush, edging towards the road. Gunfire was close behind him. . . . He could hear the shouts of the Japs as they surrounded his house and scoured the bush near by. . . . He kept running . . . hoping he could make the airfield ahead of the Japs, but as he looked back . . . [and] saw the headlights of an approaching vehicle

[7] See M. Murray, *Escape: A Thousand Miles to Freedom* (1965), pp. 53-61, for an account of the attack on Kavieng.

[8] Major J. H. McDonald, DSO, MC. (1st AIF: Maj 20 Bn.) Angau. District Officer; of New Ireland; b. Summer Hill, NSW, 2 Nov 1887.

[9] Major J. Edmonds Wilson. OC 1st Independent Company. Farmer; of Georgetown, SA; b. Red Hill, SA, 16 May 1907. Died 4 Jan 1951.

[10] Sister Maye had been evacuated from Kavieng with other European women and children in December, but on arrival at Rabaul had expressed a wish to return to Kavieng. This was agreed to.

[1] Another group of 17 civilians, of their own initiative, loaded five vessels with supplies and set out from Kavieng. The vessels might have been used to embark most of the remaining Europeans had they been commandeered for the purpose. McDonald, however, considered himself powerless to act in this way without proper authorisation. In fact the vessels were fated not to go far. One of them broke down, and all fell into Japanese hands when the other vessels delayed to go to its assistance.

[2] Capt H. J. Murray, MC, DCM. (1st AIF: Lt 2 Bn.) Coastwatcher. Planter; of Kavieng, New Ireland; b. Bowral, NSW, 13 Nov 1896. Died 22 Oct 1968.

he knew his hope was in vain. Then as the vehicle came closer he recognized it as Major Wilson's grey staff car.[3]

Murray boarded the car and reached the airfield where Wilson ordered the demolitions to be blown. A trench a few feet deep and wide, soon to be repaired by the Japanese, was blown across the strip. Then together with the demolition party they withdrew to Kaut to join up with the Independent Company and the civilians. On 30th January the Independent Company set sail in the motor vessel *Induna Star*, damaged in the air raid of the 21st and since repaired, leaving behind the civilians, including ten Europeans. Though the Europeans were afterwards severely critical of the Independent Company on this score, not to have been embarked was to prove a piece of their good fortune. The *Induna Star* was intercepted, bombed and disabled on its way south and later towed into Rabaul by a Japanese destroyer. Most of the men, like other prisoners doomed to be transported in the *Montevideo Maru*, perished at sea a few months later.

The Europeans of whom Murray was to become leader tapped out a last message to Port Moresby recording the departure of the Independent Company and their own discomfiture at being left "like shags on a rock", destroyed their teleradio and then, on 31st January, their numbers reduced to nine by one man who considered himself unfit to undertake the arduous march, themselves set out in a bid for safety.[4] They crossed to the east coast road where they commandeered a truck, joined a Japanese convoy and made a swift but perilous journey south to the Fangalawa crossing. Moving to the west coast they abandoned the truck and set off south on foot, eventually reaching Panaras Plantation, where they found the manager still in residence and playing host to other planters. The planters declared that the war would be over in a few months, they had plenty of food and liquor and native servants were available to look after their needs; they argued their views so effectively that four of Murray's party decided to stay with them. The five pushed on to Patalangat Plantation where Murray, hearing of a cutter some 80 miles to the north, retraced his steps, found the cutter and sailed it back to Patalangat with the aid of a native crew. Partly by road, partly by sea, aided by some, discouraged by others, their numbers increased to eight, they at length reached the Kamduru River, where it became evident that with Japanese camps scattered along the coast as far south as Cape St George the risk of proceeding further along the west coast was too great. They returned to Ulaputur, where they obtained a truck from a friendly missionary, and thence crossed to the west coast. Driving through sleeping Japanese guards at Namatanai they at length reached Samo where they met the Assistant District Officer, Kyle,[5] and Patrol Officer, Benham,[6] as well as another Australian planter.

[3] M. Murray, *Escape: A Thousand Miles to Freedom*, pp. 75-6. Murray, whose biographer was his wife, was President of the Kavieng RSL and a born leader.

[4] McDonald, a 1914-18 veteran with the DSO and the MC, was later to encounter hostility from Europeans who regarded him as the representative of a Government which had let them down.

[5] Lt A. F. Kyle, DSC; RANVR. Coastwatcher. Asst District Officer; of Namatanai, New Ireland; b. Toowoomba, Qld, 1897. Presumed killed 1 Sep 1942.

[6] Sub-Lt G. M. W. Benham, DSC; RANVR. Coastwatcher. Patrol Officer; of Carlton, NSW. Presumed killed 1 Sep 1942.

It transpired that Kyle and Benham, after reporting the movement of the Japanese against Rabaul, had set off down the east coast from Namatanai, collecting eight planters and missionaries on the way. At the end of January they had reached Cape Metlik, whence they signalled Port Moresby, stating that they had a boat and a party of ten and seeking directions. Kyle was requested to remain and report and Benham elected to stay with him. They sent on the others, who reached safety by way of Buka and Bougainville. Later they were joined by a group of soldiers who had escaped from New Britain. At the end of February Murray's group and the soldiers—21 in all—came together. Japanese ships had destroyed the pinnace which brought the soldiers from New Britain, but a Chinese trading vessel was commandeered at Tanga in which both groups set out on 30th April. Carried off course by currents they landed about 30 miles east of Buna on 5th May, narrowly missing becoming involved in the Coral Sea battle. At Buna they reported to F. A. Champion,[7] the Assistant Resident Magistrate, whose station was "in full working order", took on stores and sailed to Moresby. Kyle and Benham after watching the rest sail to safety, remained to continue to report. In May and July unsuccessful attempts were made to bring them out by American submarines. Their end, typical of the fate of many brave men who undertook the task of coastwatching in overrun territories, was capture and execution.

The New Ireland planters and traders who remained on their plantations after the invasion led for a time an untroubled existence. The Europeans were subject to little interference provided they obeyed the rules laid down by the Japanese.[8] Later they were rounded up and interned at Kavieng. The ultimate fate of individuals can only be surmised. Some were transferred to Rabaul where they shared the fate common to those who embarked on the *Montevideo Maru*. Probably the majority were murdered by the Japanese at Kavieng in March 1944. In January 1946 *Pacific Islands Monthly* published a list of servicemen and civilians of the South Pacific Territories who became casualties during the 1939-45 war. The list includes 36 New Ireland civilians, mainly planters, who are recorded as

[7] Capt F. A. Champion. Angau. Asst Resident Magistrate; of Buna, Papua, and Kalinga, Qld; b. Port Moresby, 27 Apr 1905.

[8] Some insight into life in New Ireland under Japanese control is provided by a proclamation issued by the commander of the Japanese garrison at Kavieng on 12th February 1942, and afterwards brought out by escapers.

It proclaimed that:

(1) No trade, viz. neither buying or selling of any commodity is permitted unless a written licence is previously applied for and obtained.
(2) All or any one of the citizens of Kavieng shall be required from time to time to engage in such labours as are ordered by me for any purpose as I think necessary. In such cases appropriate reward shall be given to labourers.
(3) No traffic, either on land or sea including harbour limits is permitted from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m., and . . . no sea traffic is permitted unless provided with a written licence by me.
(4) No removal of any commodity is permitted unless provided with a written licence by me.
(5) No light or fire is permitted to leak out of doors from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. A strict and complete blackout shall be observed during the hours ordered.
(6) Every house shall hoist a Japanese National Flag as a token of the relative citizen's allegiance to the Empire of Japan. All and every one shall bow their heads (making Keirei) whenever they see Japanese soldiers.
(7) All and every citizens are required to learn the Japanese language in the earliest possible time now that all the Territory of New Ireland belongs to the Empire of Japan.

Any breakage of any one of the above-mentioned orders shall be punishable.

Commander of
Japanese Garrison at Kavieng

"missing fate unknown". Australian investigating officers who sought early in 1946 to ascertain the fate of these civilians were told by Rear-Admiral Tamura, the commander of the Japanese naval units in New Ireland, that the civilians had been embarked for Rabaul on the *Kowa Maru* in February 1944. En route, however, the ship had been attacked by Allied aircraft and had sunk with all hands. Though the story was made credible by the fact that the *Kowa Maru* had indeed been sunk, the investigation continued. At length, by great good fortune, a survivor of the *Kowa Maru* was located. He was definite that no civilians had been embarked at Kavieng. Eventually, in June 1947, after 70 Japanese who had served at Kavieng had been interrogated, one broke down to provide details that led to the indictment of the Japanese commander and others concerned in the disappearance of the Kavieng civilians.

It transpired that in February 1944 Kavieng had been subjected to Allied naval and air bombardments which Tamura feared was a prelude to invasion. Accordingly he issued orders for the disposal of the civilians "numbering approximately 32" (another account says 23) who had been interned near the Kavieng airfield. "Disposal" was arranged by moving the civilians from their camp to the vicinity of Kavieng South wharf some time in March. They were then blindfolded and, one by one, taken to the wharf where they were killed by "ju-jitsu and strangulation". After death the bodies were loaded on to two barges which then proceeded to the vicinity of Nago and Edmago Islands where the bodies, weighted with cement sinkers, were thrown overboard. The Japanese informant had been in the crew of one of the barges.

Tamura was sentenced to death by an Australian military court and executed by hanging at Stanley Gaol, Hong Kong, on 16th March 1948.[9] Five of his subordinates received long terms of imprisonment.

The seas surrounding New Ireland and New Britain were for a time dotted with small groups of desperate escapers. One such was K. W. Chambers, a civilian in charge of a teleradio on Emirau Island, 80 miles north of Kavieng. He was one of the coastwatchers responsible for the timely warnings Rabaul had received of impending air raids, and had the rare experience of seeing the Japanese preliminaries to the invasion of Rabaul and Kavieng from the dispatching end. About dawn on 21st January, from the direction of near-by Mussau Island, his account states, he heard the sound of many aircraft engines, evidently warming up. Soon afterwards he sighted an aircraft carrier, a destroyer and a transport. He counted 46 Japanese aircraft as they passed overhead, flying south-east, and sent a message to Rabaul to this effect, telling them to "Warn Kavieng", "Warn Kavieng". Rabaul replied "Sorry, we cannot get in touch with Kavieng until 8 a.m." Between 10 and 10.30 a.m. Chambers watched the aircraft returning, one plane failing badly and losing height.

All next day he could hear the noise of many aircraft engines in the

[9] Trials of Japanese War Criminals (Attorney-General 81645).

vicinity of Mussau, and continuous flights of planes in formation passed overhead. Chambers, unable to obtain instructions from Rabaul about whether he should remain at his station, decided to leave in the last available craft and on the night of the 22nd set out for Kavieng in a pinnace with his radio equipment and two Seventh Day Adventists. About 2 a.m. "we could see a terrific glow on the horizon", he wrote afterwards. "We knew it was Kavieng going up. The huge copra sheds full of copra were ablaze. . . . We saw continual explosions as of bombs or mines going up—a terrific stab of angry red darts to each side and a huge stab into the heavens. It was an amazing and awe-inspiring sight." They by-passed Kavieng, and hugging the west coast of New Ireland by night and hiding up by day at length crossed to New Britain. There the pinnace was chased ashore by a Japanese destroyer. Scrambling hastily up a steep cliffside to a place of concealment Chambers and his companions watched helplessly as the Japanese wrecked their boat. The missionaries decided to return to the Seventh Day Adventist station at Put Put, but Chambers joined other New Britain escapers, pushed on, and eventually reached safety.

South-east of Kavieng and Rabaul were Buka and Bougainville, most northerly of the Solomon Islands, separated from each other by Buka Passage. They were part of the Kieta District, administered by a District Officer at Kieta and an Assistant District Officer, W. J. Read,[1] at Buka.

The painfully weak defence force comprised 25 soldiers detached from the 1st Independent Company at Kavieng under the leadership of Lieutenant Mackie.[2] The weakness of the defenders was well known and it was perhaps not surprising that a section of the European community round Kieta, recognising discretion as the better part of valour, should choose to make a prompt departure—precipitately and as a result of a false alarm as it turned out. More surprising was the tenacity with which others, particularly round Buka, sought to cling to their holdings.

There Read responded to the emergency by establishing hideouts near Aravia on Bougainville, and stocking them with stores. He urged the civilians to do likewise, but though the Chinese followed his advice, the Europeans, "a refractory bunch, resentful of any interference by the Government" declined, declaring that such a move would be "derogatory to their prestige with the natives".[3]

Read had no authority to order them to take measures for their own safety, but was well aware that when the emergency arrived they would be likely to turn to him, as the representative of the government, for help.

The emergency was not long delayed. On 24th January six Japanese aircraft attacked the Buka Passage area. They bombed Sohana Island, Chinatown and Buka airfield. At the airfield the Independent Company

[1] Lt-Cdr W. J. Read; RANVR. Major, Angau 1944-46. Asst District Officer; of Buka Passage, Bougainville; b. Hobart, 18 Sep 1905.

[2] Major J. H. Mackie. 1st Independent Company, "M" Special Unit. Electrician; of Kyabram, Vic; b. Kyabram, 1 Feb 1919.

[3] E. Feldt, *The Coast Watchers* (1946), pp. 118-28, from which the information in this section has been drawn.

detachment fought back with machine-guns, and one aircraft flew off, losing height. The others then bombed Soraken. The soldiers blew up the fuel and bombs at Buka Passage and left for Bougainville. Read and his staff pushed on to Aravia. Other civilians—planters who had now decided that safety lay in the jungle—were already in the vicinity.

Next day news was received that Kieta was occupied by the enemy. The news was false but it alarmed Bishop Wade, head of the Roman Catholic Mission in the North Solomon Islands, and he set off from Buka for Kieta to plead with the Japanese for fair treatment of the mission sisters. Then news came to Read that the Japanese had occupied neither Buka Passage nor Kieta. He ordered more supplies to be brought out from Buka Passage and himself set out to investigate reports of disturbances at Kieta.

On his way he passed Bishop Wade, who had abandoned his intention of going to Kieta when he too heard that the Japanese were not there.

At Kieta Read was met by two loyal native policemen, Sergeant Yauwiga and Corporal Sali, and learnt from them of the orgy of looting and destruction that had taken place after the hurried departure of the Europeans. Yauwiga and Sali had armed the police and endeavoured to control the natives who had flocked in from the surrounding villages. They had received no aid from the remaining missionaries, but Dr Kroening, a survivor of the old German administration, had seized the opportunity to reinstate himself and had, in fact, joined with the police in restoring order of a kind. Kroening retired to his plantation, and Read set about the major task of recovering the food, rice, meat and other tinned goods which had been carried away by the natives. By the end of February the long task of recovering and transporting the food northwards along the coast to inland supply dumps had been completed and Read was back at Buka Passage. There he found the Independent Company men had withdrawn inland, food dumps had been established and the area prepared for siege.

Meanwhile the planters had suffered a change of heart. Their first decision had been to continue to work their plantations. Many now felt that no good purpose would be served by remaining, and joined in the fairly general exodus that followed. A minority, including three women, evidently unable to comprehend the dangers involved, were still resolved to remain and look after their properties.

On 8th March six Japanese cruisers and two destroyers anchored in Carola Haven near Kessa. The Japanese came ashore and met Percy Good, an elderly planter of Kessa Plantation, formerly a coastwatcher. They placed Good on parole and forced the coastwatching party established at Kessa to flee. Read, informed by runner of the arrival of the Japanese at Carola Haven, signalled Port Moresby. The news of the arrival of Japanese ships at Carola Haven was broadcast in Australia on 14th March. Two days later, evidently as a result of this unwitting betrayal, the Japanese returned to Kessa, brutally handled and killed Good. Read now

persuaded the remaining Europeans to evacuate Buka while there was still time. The fate of Good precipitated action to enlist the civilian coastwatchers into the services. Early in April Read, P. E. Mason[4] of Inus Plantation, and others were appointed to the R.A.N.V.R. The Japanese were by now on the move all round Bougainville. On 30th March they occupied Buka Passage, and sent parties scouring the north end of Bougainville. Read attempted to persuade the missionaries now at Tarlena to accompany him to Aravia on the east coast, but they would not go. Soon afterwards they passed under Japanese control. On 30th March also the Japanese occupied Faisi in the Shortlands. They attacked Kieta, then Buin, driving away the coastwatching parties. As time went on Japanese propaganda and the obvious weakness of the Australians began to turn the natives against them. Their safety was further imperilled when Japanese patrols began to penetrate inland. By the end of the year the planters, now living in the hills, were clamouring to be taken out to safety. Bishop Wade, prohibited from teaching by the Japanese, was also anxious for the Mission Sisters to be removed.

At length in response to signals from Read, a rendezvous with a submarine from the South Pacific Area was arranged at a small harbour on the north-east tip of Bougainville. Thither the nuns from Tarlena Mission and the planters made their way. On the last night of the year the submarine slipped into harbour to pick up the refugees and take them to safety.

Away to the westward of Kavieng in the Admiralty Islands, Lorengau, headquarters of the Manus District, had been attacked on 25th January by a force of eight Japanese float-planes. The aircraft began bombing at 7.40 a.m. and persisted for five hours and a half. Two planes were shot down and another damaged. Most of the native police deserted after the raid, but were afterwards rounded up. Anticipating an enemy landing, a section of the ubiquitous 1st Independent Company stationed at Lorengau, destroyed all houses, the petrol dumps and small shipping in the harbour. Then they withdrew inland. Other raids followed on 1st and 15th February. On 29th March three aircraft searched Manus, apparently in an attempt to locate the headquarters of the soldiers. On 8th April the Japanese arrived at Lorengau in a transport, escorted by two cruisers and a destroyer.

Warned of their approach by Tupling,[5] a coastwatcher in the lonely Ninigo Islands to the west, the Australians withdrew to the south coast. There two schooners were waiting. On the 11th the men of the Independent Company, accompanied by the Assistant District Officer, Vertigan,[6] and three other civilians, embarked for the mainland of New Guinea. They landed at Bogadjim on 14th April, pushed inland to Mount Hagen, whither they were evacuated by civil aircraft, initially to Thursday Island and then to Cairns.

[4] Lt P. E. Mason, DSC; RANVR. Coastwatcher. Plantation manager; of Bougainville; b. Sydney, 30 Apr 1901.

[5] Petty Officer W. L. Tupling; RANVR. Coastwatcher. Plantation Manager. Presumed killed 20 Mar 1943.

[6] Major D. H. Vertigan, MBE; Angau. Asst District Officer; of Manus I; b. Forth, Tas, 27 Aug 1906.

On the New Guinea mainland the plight of civilians in the threatened areas during this period, though still acute, was less complicated than in the islands, where dangerous sea voyages confronted would-be escapers and invasion had usually followed hard on the heels of major air attacks. Women and children generally had gone, but at the settlements along the coast as far west as Wewak were bands of men whose best hopes of reaching Port Moresby were by aircraft. If these hopes were not realised, arduous marches through wild, forbidding country and across daunting mountain ranges faced them.

On 21st January the Japanese had begun widespread blanketing raids —the first on the New Guinea mainland—which preceded the landings at Rabaul and Kavieng.

A few minutes before noon that day the operators in the A.W.A. Wireless Station at Lae picked up a warning flashed by Patrol Officer Pursehouse[7] at Finschhafen that "60 enemy aircraft [were] headed south". They passed on the message to Bulolo, but were unable to warn Salamaua. The air raid siren sounded, and the population of Lae (about 120 Europeans and 60 Chinese), many still believing the alarm to be only a test, took cover in slit trenches which had been wisely provided.[8]

The aircraft divided as they swept in over the sea, about half heading towards Salamaua, five fighters in the direction of Bulolo, and the remainder estimated at 9 fighters and 15 bombers concentrating on Lae. The attack began at 12.5 p.m., and continued for three-quarters of an hour. The fighters machine-gunned the area indiscriminately, nearly every house being damaged, while the bombers flew over several times in formation, dropping bombs. The Guinea Airways hangars and six civil aircraft on the aerodrome were destroyed, but the field remained serviceable. The A.W.A. office and the power house plant were destroyed, the hotel was strafed, and the Burns Philp store suffered bomb-blast.

About half an hour after the raid at his house in the town, the Administrator, so ill that he had had to be helped into a slit trench, saw Major Jenyns,[9] the senior N.G.V.R. officer. "I suppose a state of emergency exists," said Jenyns. "I suppose so, Jenyns," said McNicoll. "You can take over." Thus without any formalities so far as the Administrator was concerned the civil administration of the Territory of New Guinea terminated, and control passed to the army.

That afternoon the Administration staff including the Assistant Government Secretary, Lonergan,[1] the senior administration officer at Lae, E. Taylor,[2] and the civilians went to a previously arranged rendezvous

[7] Capt L. Pursehouse, AIF. Coastwatcher; Angau; "M" Special Unit 1943-44. Patrol officer; of Finschhafen, TNG; b. Goulburn, NSW, 4 Nov 1912. Killed in action 17 Jan 1944.

[8] The Administrator remarked afterwards that it had been "difficult to suggest measures of protection . . . without causing the population to leave the town". The slit trenches, however, proved their worth.

[9] Major E. W. Jenyns. (1st AIF: Lt 26 Bn.) NGVR and Angau. Gold miner and planter; of Lae, TNG; b. Beaudesert, Qld, 7 Sep 1893.

[1] Lt-Col S. A. Lonergan; Angau. Asst Government Secretary TPNG 1949-51, Govt Secretary 1951-55; Director of Civil Affairs 1955-60. Public servant; b. Hobart, 29 Mar 1899.

[2] Lt-Col E. Taylor, MBE; Angau. Assistant Director of District Services and Native Affairs; of Lae, TNG; b. Mt Morgan, Qld, 29 May 1888.

near Jacobsen's Plantation, about 3 miles out of Lae. At Lae, as elsewhere on the mainland, food dumps had been established outside the town in anticipation of such an emergency.

No news of the events at Lae reached Port Moresby until the 24th when a small transmitter taken from the Administrator's yacht was established at the hidden camp. The evacuation of the civilians was complicated because the Markham was in flood at its highest level for years. After several days in camp Taylor decided to move the refugees to Nadzab. Thence they were ferried by Moth aircraft to Wampit and led by Taylor on foot through Sunshine and Bulolo to Wau.

Fifteen, including some elderly civilians who did not join the main group, remained at Lae until the evening of 23rd January when they were sent by launch to Salamaua, to walk thence to Wau.

At Salamaua, where the warning message from Finschhafen had not been received, the raiders, variously estimated at between 35 and 50, took the town by surprise. They bombed the airfield, destroyed one R.A.A.F. Hudson and 10 or 12 civil aircraft on the ground, and machine-gunned the town. Despite the intensity of the attack there was only one Australian casualty. Kevin Parer, a member of a well-known goldfields family, was in his loaded aeroplane, its engine running, waiting to take off for Wau when the Japanese came in on their first run. Hit in the base of the spine, Parer was killed instantly. Another pilot, who had just landed, was taxiing to the hangar when bullets ripped through his plane, setting it on fire. He flung himself out of the plane into the kunai grass.

As at Lae there was no opposition to the Japanese, who bombed from about 8,000 feet then strafed at will. After the raid all business halted, and "everyone adjourned to the pub" to discuss the situation. A confusing picture faced them. They were out of touch with Wau and Bulolo, but believed both those places had suffered severely; they were also out of touch with Lae where thick black smoke could be seen rising. Expecting further attacks on Salamaua, the civilian population withdrew on the night of the 22nd to a previously prepared camp in the bush behind Kela. Next day the police deserted the post at Salamaua and released the gaol prisoners. Armed with confiscated firearms, the prisoners took to the bush, and began indiscriminately to shoot up the area round Salamaua. That day the civilians picked up sufficient news on a small wireless set to make it evident that Rabaul had been attacked. There was general agreement that a Japanese landing at Salamaua was imminent and that all civilians should leave as soon as possible. Assuming that air traffic out of Wau had ceased, they decided that only two routes of escape were left to them: on foot south to Port Moresby; or by sea, down the coast, in the only two small craft available or in canoes. Finally it was decided that R. Melrose, the Director of District Services and Native Affairs in the Administration, who was suffering from heart trouble, would take out the obviously unfit and Sister Stock,[3] from the Salamaua Hospital, by sea, while Penglase,

[3] At Kavieng, Salamaua and elsewhere the administration nursing sisters were uniformly stoical and courageous.

District Officer in charge of the Morobe District, would lead the remainder towards the south coast. Both parties set out on 24th January.[4]

At Madang, on the 21st, four Japanese aircraft destroyed a copra store and damaged other buildings. One R.A.A.F. Hudson was destroyed and W. R. Carpenter's hangar damaged, but the airfield was usable. As elsewhere the civil administration was interrupted and most of the civil population of the town (about 70 all told) gathered at a pre-arranged assembly point about two miles to the south. On the 22nd they set out on foot along an evacuation route which took them in planned stages extending over about a fortnight to Kainantu in the Central Highlands. There the fit men of military age were called up for service. The others went on to Mount Hagen to await air transport to Australia.

The little gold-mining town of Bulolo was also attacked on the 21st by five fighters—part of the force first sighted by Pursehouse. They swept low up the valley, destroyed three Junkers on the ground at Bulolo, and then, turning east before they reached Wau, missed five aircraft on the Wau field which were later to prove invaluable during the evacuation of civilians by air.

On 22nd January the Defence Committee ordered that all aircraft capable of flying from New Guinea should do so, carrying as many civilians as possible. The heaviest concentration was on the Morobe goldfields where 450 European men and over 100 Chinese awaited evacuation. The War Cabinet, believing the concentration to comprise "450 females, 100 Chinese and children", on 24th January ordered that three civil aircraft from New Guinea, then in Queensland, should be used for the task. On the 26th the War Cabinet learned that the pilots had refused to return to New Guinea. They were grounded and their licences cancelled. The true figures of civilians at Morobe were also made available to War Cabinet.[5] The Director-General of Civil Aviation instructed Carpenter's to send a machine for the women and children.

On 29th January, Lonergan, the former Assistant Government Secretary, now with McNicoll at Port Moresby, reported that "all towns except Wau" had been evacuated; movement by air from Morobe was continuing but "shortage of aircraft and engines and health troubles were causing delay". He and McNicoll left Port Moresby in the *Macdhui* for Cairns that day. From then until early March Wau became the main evacuation centre for the goldfields population. Thither other civilians from distant parts also made their way. Most of the Europeans and Asians who gathered there believed that little time remained for them to quit the threatened area. They were joined by the civilians from Lae, who came in on foot under the leadership of Taylor, and walkers from Salamaua, whom Penglase had diverted to Wau when he discovered that town still intact.

Meanwhile the Assistant District Officer at Wau, McMullen,[6] who

[4] Melrose's party reached Kokoda on 9th February, whence they were flown to Port Moresby.
[5] The actual figures were 450 men, 100 Chinese women and children and three white women.
[6] Colonel K. C. McMullen. Angau; Directorate of Research LHQ; BBCAU. Asst District Officer; of Wau, TNG; b. Sydney, 17 Nov 1904.

had been requested by Canberra "to take control of all administrative activities in New Guinea with which he was in contact",[7] aided by Assistant District Officer Niall,[8] had succeeded in evacuating a number of civilians to Port Moresby, frequently in aircraft that would not normally have been considered airworthy.

On 1st February, however, Wau airfield was heavily attacked. The airfield remained serviceable, but the risk of allowing in unescorted aircraft was evident. McMullen, when reporting the bombing, asked whether it was intended to continue to evacuate by aircraft. "Is any alternative under consideration?" he asked. "Essential that some definite decision be made in order to permit of organisation here."

The R.A.A.F. was unable to supply fighters and temporarily halted the evacuation, stating that the Lockheeds which had been engaged in the operation would go to Australia on the 3rd and remain there.[9] About 150 Europeans and 95 Chinese were still awaiting evacuation. The Chinese at Lae had refused to leave.

Taylor meanwhile had taken charge of a refugee camp set up at Edie Creek. The civilians themselves were willing to face almost any hardships to avoid capture. After expert local advice had been obtained, it was decided that a party should be sent out to blaze a track to Bulldog and build camps between there and Wau. It was planned that parties of carriers, each under an administration official, should begin leaving Wau daily to build up stocks of food at the camps. Port Moresby was asked to arrange the provision of food at the mouth of the Lakekamu and sea transport thence to Port Moresby for 250 people from 25th February. The staging camps were established but the plan to stock them with food was not realised.[1] Consequently the refugees carried their own rations, supplementing them from a dump at Kudjeru.

Penglase and a surveyor, Ecclestone,[2] led out one party to Bulldog. Taylor took out about 60 Europeans and Chinese on 7th March.[3] In this fashion the refugees at length reached Port Moresby.

Even more arduous marches confronted civilians seeking safety from the Sepik area. Many of these were from Wewak, administrative centre of the Sepik District, which stretched from the Dutch border eastward along the coast and then south almost to the Papuan border. Between the coast and the Sepik River ran the rugged Bewani and Torricelli Mountains. South of the river lay almost unknown country shut in by great ranges

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[7] A liaison officer between the New Guinea and Papuan administrations at Port Moresby was also appointed at that time—a step that seems to have been long overdue.

[8] Major Hon H. L. R. Niall, CBE. Angau. District Commissioner, Morobe, TPNG 1950-64; Speaker, House of Assembly 1964-68. Asst District Officer; of Wau, TNG; b. Coolah, NSW, 14 Oct 1904.

[9] McMullen continued to seek aircraft, but unavailingly.

[1] There had been some 10,000 to 12,000 natives on the goldfields when the goldfields life-line—the airways—ceased operations. Of the natives about half were from areas to which they could walk home. They were given rations and sent on their way. About 4,000 to 5,000 "foreign" natives remained. Many "went bush" after the first air raids, but gradually they were rounded up until their numbers reached about 2,500, a force of fit and loyal labourers upon whom the army was for a time completely dependent.

[2] Capt J. W. Ecclestone. Angau; RAE (Forestry) 1944-45. Surveyor; of Lae, TNG; b. Carlsruhe, Vic, 15 Apr 1898.

[3] Next day the Japanese landed at Lae and Salamaua.

running from east to west. The Sepik River people were head-hunters and likely to prove dangerous. District Officer Jones,[4] who was in charge of the district, at the beginning of January had worked out an overland escape route by way of the Sepik and the Karawari (a tributary of the Sepik), and thence to the Strickland River and Daru on the south coast of Papua.

After hearing of the air raids of 21st January, most of the 30 to 40 European settlers in the district assembled in the camps which Jones was stocking up on the Karawari, and awaited further instructions about evacuation. By mid-February they had become restless and began to leave the Karawari for Angoram, an Administration post about 60 miles upstream from the mouth of the Sepik. On the 19th Jones sent the Administration launch *Thetis* and four schooners to Madang, to assist in evacuating survivors from Rabaul and building up supplies along the route to the Ramu River. Jones meanwhile had informed the people at Angoram that he would remain at Wewak and that there and elsewhere in the district the Administration staff would remain on duty.

At this stage the Assistant District Officer at Angoram began to behave strangely and Jones, on 10th March, ordered J. L. Taylor[5] to take over the post. The Angoram officer refused to hand over his station; he armed about 40 native police and on the 20th, after a three-hour battle during which Taylor was severely wounded, drove all the Europeans from Angoram.

Jones (from Wewak) with a small band of seven other European volunteers and seven natives, advanced on the station on the 23rd but found that the Assistant District Officer had killed himself and his police had fled. Next day Jones departed for Wewak leaving Assistant District Officer Bates[6] in charge at Angoram. Soon Bates received news that some of the rebel police had killed Patrol Officer R. Strudwick on his way from the Karawari to Angoram. Later the rebels also killed three European miners, two Chinese and many natives and caused disorder among the natives generally until they themselves were finally killed or apprehended.

By this time practically all the European residents, except the Administration staff, had departed. Jones had sent about 12 off in the schooner *Nereus* with instructions to land at Bogadjim and thence make their way overland to safety. J. H. Thurston, a goldfields pioneer, took a party up the May River as far as they could travel by water. Thence, at the end of April, eight Europeans and 82 natives set out through the mountains, arriving safely at Daru on 21st September.

Jones and his men were kept busy maintaining their administration, subduing the rebellious police and restoring order among the natives generally. On 19th May, hearing that the Japanese had occupied Hollandia, the capital of Dutch New Guinea, Jones decided to go there and discover for himself what was happening. He left Wewak on the 25th with thirteen

[4] Lt-Col J. H. Jones. (1st AIF: Sgt 2 Fd Amb.) Angau. District Officer; of Sepik River District; b. Liverpool, England, 7 May 1897.

[5] Major J. L. Taylor. Angau. Asst District Officer; b. Sydney, 25 Jan 1901.

[6] Major C. D. Bates, MC. Angau. Asst District Officer; of Rabaul, TNG; b. Uitenhage, South Africa, 4 Aug 1907. Died 1 Jan 1954.

men in a small motor vessel. From the border he sent scouts forward and they reported that the Japanese had been at Hollandia but had gone again. Jones and his men thereupon sailed into Hollandia harbour on the afternoon of the 28th, set up a flagpole on the jetty and hoisted the Australian Blue Ensign. A Javanese medical officer told them that the Japanese had arrived at Hollandia on the 6th; after landing about 200 marines, who raided the Government stores, they left, taking with them the Dutch *Controleur*, his wife and child and a Dutch priest. The Japanese had said they would return in three weeks. The Australians lowered their flag at 6 p.m. and sailed at 7 p.m., narrowly escaping capture by a Japanese destroyer on their way back to Wewak.

The effect on the natives of the collapse of the administration is illustrated in a report by Penglase, who went to take charge of the Madang District the same month.

> Natives found themselves in circumstances to which they were not accustomed (he wrote). Overnight the Government, with its benevolent policy in which they had the greatest confidence and respect, no longer functioned. Roads, gardens and villages were neglected, and some natives, hitherto residing in villages near Madang, evacuated and moved to safer locations in the bush. Vast numbers were passing through the district from Morobe and other places of employment, whilst others were travelling to the Markham, Finschhafen and Waria, spreading the most impossible rumours. Japanese bombs had struck fear into their very hearts and they were bewildered and apprehensive about the future. In addition the town had been looted, plantations were deserted and practically every unprotected home had been ransacked. In this connection it can be said that not only the natives were responsible. The District Office had been demolished, all records destroyed and the safe blown open and robbed of its entire contents of value. Missionaries, however, had remained at their respective stations and were exercising their influence in an endeavour to maintain control of the natives, and members of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles also did good work in this respect. . . . The only [Administration] officers remaining in the district on the 24th May were Lieutenant J. R. Black[7] at Bogia, who had not received any instructions and decided to remain at his post, and Lieutenant R. H. Boyan[8] who was actively engaged assisting in the evacuation of troops from New Britain.[9]

The handful of Administration officers had not been helped in their attempts to evacuate the north coast country by the uneasy situation which was developing at Port Moresby between the headquarters of the Papuan Administration and Headquarters 8th Military District, as the army headquarters in Papua-New Guinea was known.

Port Moresby occupied the saddle and slopes of a promontory which ended in Paga Point, where fixed defences of two 6-inch guns had been installed. The advent of about 1,250 troops in 1941 had almost doubled the population of the territory and greatly taxed essential services in the little town. The people of Papua had shown a similar eagerness to back the war effort as their Australian counterparts. A local Red Cross comforts fund had sent £1,000 to London, subscriptions to a War Fund opened

[7] Lt-Col J. R. Black. Angau and BBCAU. Asst District Officer; of Bogia, TNG; b. Adelaide, 12 May 1908.

[8] Capt R. H. Boyan; Angau. Patrol officer; of Aitape, NG; b. Sydney, 10 Jun 1913.

[9] This extract appears also in McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*, pp. 49-50.

in June 1940 amounted to £5,750 and had been sent as an unconditional gift to the Commonwealth Treasury. Sixty men had enlisted in the A.I.F. —26 from the Administrative service.

The Administrator of Papua on the outbreak of the Japanese War was Hubert Leonard Murray,[1] who had been appointed for a term of five years from 16th December 1940. Though his tenure of office was thus less than a year old, he was a nephew of the former Lieut-Governor, Sir Hubert Murray, whose private secretary he had been for the 24 years before he became Administrator. Under the *Papua Act 1905-1940*, the Administrator was appointed by the Governor-General by commission under the Seal of the Commonwealth to hold office during the pleasure of the Governor-General, and charged with the duty of administering the government of the territory on behalf of the Commonwealth.[2]

The military commander of the 8th Military District was Brigadier B. M. Morris, whose headquarters had been established at Port Moresby in May 1941. He was a plain-spoken artilleryman, gifted with common-sense and fully aware of the increasing importance of his command, an outcome of which was his promotion to major-general on 1st January.

There was no evidence of strain between Administrator and Commandant before Japan's entry into the war, and their cordial relations continued for some time afterwards. Military measures and civil requirements kept in step, each being instituted with proper regard for precedent and protocol. One of the first steps taken was the internment on 8th December of all Japanese. That day also the Administrator took up the question of the evacuation of the European women and children with the naval officer in charge at Port Moresby, and on the 10th with the Department of External Territories. The first and major evacuation took place in H.M.A.T. *Katoomba* on 20th December and substantially the whole of the under-taking had been completed without noticeable hitch by 29th December—a considerable achievement.

From 12th December the army had begun gradually to encroach on civilian accommodation and offices. That day the Department of Lands Section was taken over for a composite battalion headquarters and 70 troops were moved into the Port Moresby Institute Hall. On the 14th the Roman Catholic school was taken over to house pay, records, stationery and other army sections. For some time the acquisition of the Port Moresby sports ground had been under discussion. Now the Administrator took the sensible view that altered circumstances justified his acceding to army requirements. The construction of public air raid shelters was begun, and the digging of private shelters encouraged.

On the 19th the Administrator learned from the Department of

[1] Hon H. L. Murray, CBE. Private and Official Secretary to the Lieut-Governor of Papua 1916-40; Administrator of Papua 1940-42; attached Allied Geographical Section GHQ SWPA 1942-45. B. Sydney, 13 Dec 1886. Died 10 Dec 1963.

[2] The circumstances relating to the suspension of the Civil Administration of the Territory of Papua in February 1942 were closely examined by a Commission of Inquiry to which John Vincent Barry, K.C., was appointed Commissioner. The inquiry, opened at Melbourne on 1st December 1944, took evidence over 18 days and examined 40 witnesses. The evidence and exhibits covered 702 pages of transcript. Inevitably much of the facts and opinions set out in the following brief account are based on the Commissioner's findings.

External Territories that a proposal to use the Papuan and New Guinea Constabulary as an armed force would not be proceeded with. The Department of the Army advised the Commandant direct that

> it is not proposed to use Royal Papuan Constabulary as armed force—could usefully be employed civil guards as part of normal function—inform administration Papua.

There were conferences on the 21st and 23rd December between the Administrator and the Commandant about liaison between the two authorities and the quartering of defence personnel.

On the 23rd the Administrator wrote to the Department of External Territories regarding the powers vested in the Commandant under the Defence Quartering Order, and the probable use of such powers.[3] The apprehensions expressed by the Administrator later proved unfounded but, in the opinion of the Commissioner, the matters raised revealed "a latent resistance on the part of the Administrator which arose . . . from his fear that the military were increasingly encroaching on his authority". Yet the Administrator's memorandum to his department clearly recognised the compelling needs of the military.

On 3rd January the liner *Aquitania* arrived with about 3,700 "young and untrained troops".[4] Almost overnight the garrison's strength jumped to about 5,500. Civilians were outnumbered by nearly 15 to 1. The military police who accompanied the newly-arrived troops were insufficient and described as "worthless in the performance of their duties". Their officers were "inexperienced". The ships' cargoes were stowed in such a way that camp equipment was at the bottom of the holds. Thus when the troops were disembarked there were no facilities to enable them to be properly fed and encamped. These conditions contributed to disorderly and undisciplined conduct. The troops made use of the town's available amenities, crowded shops and cafes, thronged the local picture theatre and drank the civilians' beer—greatly increasing tension. The sanitation of the camps, due to lack of sanitary pans, was for a time unsatisfactory, and led to complaints to the Department of External Territories from the Administrator.[5] On the 13th the Administrator asked his department to arrange with the army for instructions to be sent to the heads of the respective services at Port Moresby that he should be kept fully informed of all developments that might affect the territory. He pointed out that his liaison officer rarely saw the Commandant, who supplied no information that could not have been obtained from current wireless broadcasts.

These complaints, of a minor character in themselves, are symptomatic

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[3] His letter was described by the Commissioner as "a secret memorandum of complaint"; the Commissioner added that it "would have been better if, at this stage, the Administrator had discussed fully and frankly wtih the Commandant the matters raised in that memorandum", and that "such a course might have cleared the air to the advantage of all concerned".
The Administrator said afterwards that the memorandum was "secret" only because it related to defence matters. He had not sought to conceal from the Commandant the protests and complaints he had been receiving about military quartering, but in fact had written to him about them. (Letter from Administrator to Minister for External Territories, dated 12 June 1945.)

[4] Barry Report, p. 4. The Commissioner added that the troops were of an "average age of 18½ years", but an analysis of the records of over 3,000 men in the convoy shows their average age to have been 23-25 years, and the average length of their training 8.3 months. The average age of the infantry officers in the convoy was much higher. (War Cabinet Agendum 299/1945.)

[5] The use of deep trench latrines in the field later became practically universal.

of the predicament in which the Administrator found himself. The civilians looked to him to obtain redress for the increasing (and necessary) encroachments of the military at a time when events were rapidly reducing the Administrator's powers. A less conscientious man might have surrendered more readily to the tide of circumstance enveloping him.

On 23rd January a false air raid alarm was sounded. The natives, already agitated by the departure of the European women and children, became panic stricken and fled to the bush. Although many returned to the town later, it was evident, as the Administrator pointed out, that "fear of the unknown" had taken hold; few expected the natives to remain when air raids began. As all labour at Port Moresby was performed by natives their departure would result in the collapse of the civil way of life, and the end of the effective functioning of the civil administration. By arrangement with the Administrator the army took over control of the power house and telephone exchange. The local newspaper ceased publication. Few functions of a municipal character then remained for the civil administration to perform at Port Moresby.

Meanwhile, on 16th January, as a result of the representations made from Rabaul about the evacuation of unessential civilians, the Chiefs of Staff had issued their general recommendation that the civil administration should be maintained as long as possible and deprecating the withdrawal of administration officers so long as there was work for them to do.

Although obviously of general application this recommendation was not communicated to the Administrator of Papua. It has been remarked earlier how little contact there was between the two administrations, although supervised by the same department in Canberra. It seems possible that the functions of the newly-created department were similarly separate, or at least not functioning smoothly at this time.[6]

On the 23rd the Administrator and the Commandant had also discussed the question of the evacuation of civilians from Samarai, which the O.C. there had recommended. The Administrator telegraphed the Government next day asking whether consideration was being given to the evacuation of civilians and the continuance of industry generally, and adding that all Port Moresby service heads considered that removal to Australia of all civilians was desirable. On the 25th a reply was being drafted by the Department of External Territories embodying the views of the Chiefs of Staff as mentioned above, when the War Cabinet decided that all able-bodied white males in Papua and New Guinea should be called up.[7] The Administrator and the Commandant each learnt in separate messages of this decision next day. Neither telegram mentioned exemptions, but in a later message of the 26th (received on the 27th) the Commandant's

[6] "The Department of External Territories was not created until June 1941; previously the work proper to such a Department had been entrusted to a section which over the years found itself attached to various Departments, usually under an Assistant Minister. At the relevant period although there was a Minister for External Territories and the separate Department had been established, the Secretaryship was held by the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department and many of the facilities of this latter Department had still to be used by the new Department of External Territories." Barry report, p. 51.

[7] The proclamation calling up Classes I to IV under the *Defence Act* did not appear in the *Commonwealth Gazette* until 11th February 1942.

attention was drawn to Section 61 of the *Defence Act* and the essential service exemptions under National Service Regulations.

Meanwhile, on the 26th, the Administrator had dispatched a telegram to his department stating that he "presumed the necessary call-up proclamation would be issued by the Governor-General immediately, and that this would mean the closing down of all industry and the end of civil administration". The message though silent on a matter of first importance —native affairs—was significant as demonstrating that before the call-up actually took place the Administrator had accepted the fact that his Administration was to come to an end. He sought the Governor-General's pleasure in regard to himself and members of the Executive Council holding Governor-General's Commissions.

General Morris issued a call-up notice on the morning of 27th January requesting all male inhabitants between 18 and 45 years of age to report for enrolment that afternoon. The call-up inevitably resulted in the closing of the commercial houses, and signified the end of the civil administration and the substitution of the military as the supreme authority—in fact if not in law. The Administrator, however, still continued to receive instructions that the civil administration, banks, works department and other civic services were to be maintained.[8] So too did Morris, who chose to disregard them.

The Administrator's message of the 26th, referred by the Department of Defence Coordination to the Department of the Army, resulted in the army signalling the Commandant direct on the 27th, stating that they had sighted the Administrator's message of the 26th and that it was not intended that the call-up of able-bodied men should mean the end of all industry and administration or that the army should take over all essential services. Two voices were calling out confused instructions. The call-up had taken place in accordance with the unequivocal message from Army Headquarters of the 25th and the War Cabinet decision that "all able-bodied white males in Papua and New Guinea who are British subjects should be called up for military service".[9] But General Morris, in order to obey the latest direction, would be required to discharge a goodly number, if not a majority, of those already enlisted.

Morris was afterwards criticised on two counts: for acting with "undue precipitancy" over the call-up; and on the grounds that the call-up had been taken deliberately to close up civilian businesses and bring an end to the civil administration. The call-up was in obedience to a direction from

[8] The confusion that reigned at Port Moresby is illustrated by a message from the Works Director, Moresby, dated 28th January, addressed to the Interior and to the Director-General of Works, stating that subject to a ten days exemption "to enable completion of essential portions of both day labour and contract works" the Interior officers and workmen were expected to go into the army; the men of all other contractors had already been called up. Banking facilities "being suspended today and this office unable to pay local accounts and wages at Moresby". On 29th January the Savings Bank of Sydney asked that ledgers and other vital records should be forwarded to Sydney at the first opportunity. The Bank of New South Wales sought advice about closing on the 3rd and continued until the 5th.

In accordance with Morris's belief that "a stage had been reached when everyone should have been in the Army . . . at any moment any white individual here, whatever his occupation or vocation might have to drop his pen and pick up a rifle", all Government officers were called up. The liaison officer between the two administrations went in on the 26th but was released shortly afterwards.

[9] Message G4384; War Cabinet Minute.

Army Headquarters at a time of emergency, and was obeyed with proper celerity. As to the second criticism Morris declared in evidence: "I can give you my assurance that no such thought entered my head."[1] There was the usual criticism of the manner of the call-up. Medical examinations were carried out "in disregard of decency"; there was "an unnecessary show of military authority"—in fact the indignities common to every call-up, of which all become painfully aware during the awkward period of transition from sheltered civilian to soldier.

Moves and countermoves as between the Department of the Army in Melbourne and the Department of External Territories in Canberra, resulting in messages sent to the Commandant and to the Administrator in the following days in an endeavour to rescind the obviously inevitable consequences of the general call-up, are insignificant except to demonstrate muddled thinking and lack of realism on the part of the departments concerned.

On the 28th the Department of External Territories in reply to the Administrator's message of the 26th notified him that it was not intended that the army should take over essential services, that the Commandant had been so informed and that men required for essential services were exempt from military service unless required in their trade capacity. The Administrator was also informed that the civil administration should be maintained for as long as necessary and possible. This message was received by the Administrator on the morning of the 29th. That day the Commandant signalled Army Headquarters requesting that unwanted European males in Papua should be evacuated. The Commandant reported that there might be embarrassment as the Administrator had declared that he had been supplied with this authority.[2] It was probable that a ship would leave that night. After consulting the Minister for the Army a reply was sent to the Commandant that day. It said:

> All European males unfit or overage or not required for military or essential services may be evacuated immediately. Administrator being advised by External Territories Department.[3]

After consultation with the Department of the Army, the Assistant Secretary of the Department of External Territories, Mr Halligan,[4] on the 30th sent a message to the Administrator varying the advice on the evacuation of unessential civilians so that their evacuation became permissible rather than compulsory, and endeavouring to clarify the Administrator's role at Port Moresby. Received by the Administrator on the 31st, it read in part:

> All European males unfit or overage or not required for military or essential service may be permitted to proceed from Territory. . . . Army state . . . that Com-

[1] Transcript, pp. 501-2.

[2] No attempt appears to have been made to sort out the functions of the civil and military authorities in the Territories or indeed to decide whether they should remain together in time of war.

[3] Message 4884 of 29 Jan. The Commandant was in the happy position of receiving immediate response to messages sent to Melbourne, whereas advice to the Administrator frequently trailed by two or three days.

[4] J. R. Halligan, OBE. Secretary, Dept of External Territories 1944-51; Senior Commissioner, South Pacific Commission 1948-59. Public servant; of Canberra; b. East Melbourne, 8 Nov 1894. Died 21 Nov 1968.

mandant has again been informed that the call up of males is to be on the same basis as in Australia, i.e. essential *civilian* activities to proceed in normal way and personnel required for such services to be exempted from military service. *Have been* informed that Banks and Works Dept have ceased functioning owing to staff having been called up for military service; this is not intended and it has been made clear to Commandant by Army that exemptions from military service should be *granted* to enable Administration and other civic activities to function. Suggest you discuss with Commandant to clarify position and then advise whether position clear.[5]

This message substantially altered the Administrator's conception of his role. Hitherto he had been passively resigned to the gradual takeover of control by the Commandant. A natural assumption now was that Morris had acted with undue precipitancy; it was within his (the Administrator's) power to correct matters. After receipt of the message he instructed the Crown Law Officer, Mr Bignold,[6] to take steps to obtain the release of 24 men required by the commercial houses to enable them to resume business.

That day Morris had signalled Army Headquarters that in conference with the Administrator and the Department of the Interior nominal rolls of all essential personnel had been prepared,[7] but to avoid complications in an emergency (i.e. invasion) such personnel had been enlisted subject to medical fitness and age and granted leave without pay whilst engaged on essential duties—a sensible precaution and in the interests of the men themselves. He reported that of 307 civilians called-up, 79 marched into camp, 61 were medically unfit, 156 were granted leave without pay as being engaged on essential service and 11 granted exemptions under Section 61 of the *Defence Act*. He considered the position "entirely satisfactory". When Bignold at length reached him with the Administrator's request that a further 24 of the 79 marched into camp be released to enable the commercial houses to resume normal business, Morris with good reason refused to agree.

At this stage civilian stores had pooled their businesses and arranged that one should remain open for business for a limited period each day on a cash basis, making no deliveries. Food depots had been established outside the town. The freezing plant continued to function, but the hotel had already ceased to serve liquor. Soon it would close altogether and a principal source of meals for the remaining civilians would disappear.

Next day an interview took place between the Administrator and the Commandant, attended by the Crown Law Officer, Morris's senior administrative officer, Lieut-Colonel E. B. Serisier, and the Commandant's A.D.C. The Administrator expressed regret that the only time that the Commandant and he had not been in complete harmony was when the

[5] Radio message No. 28. The words italicised were corrupted in transmission and rendered indecipherable. Mr Halligan said afterwards that the word "civic" though correctly transmitted was intended to read "civil".
The Commissioner commented that "expressions such as 'essential services' and 'civic activities' may have an ascertainable meaning in Australia, but they were ambiguous phrases of obscure application to conditions in Papua and Port Moresby".

[6] E. B. Bignold. Crown Law Officer, Papuan Administration 1928-42; served RAAF; Judge, Supreme Court of TPNG 1948-62. B. Kirribilli, NSW, 27 Apr 1900.

[7] The Administrator was unable to remember these rolls being prepared, but the 8 MD War Diary entry of 31st January 1942 suggests that they were.

general's instructions from the army clashed with those from the Prime Minister's Department to himself. "Unfortunately," he declared, "that is the present position in regard to the continuance of business here. I am directed to carry on normal civic activities and administration whereas the General disagrees."[8]

The Commandant said that "the time had come for instructions from Canberra to be disregarded, that the Administrator and he could surely run this little place without outside interference". The Administrator declared that this he absolutely refused to do. He was bound by his commission and instructions and so long as he continued to function he could not depart from them. "You sir," he said to the Commandant, "would not disregard army instructions as a soldier." "That is rather different," replied Morris.

It seems likely that the Administrator read into General Morris's remarks more than was intended. Both the Administrator and the Commandant were greatly handicapped by the necessity to refer to authorities on the mainland, "who had no clear understanding of the local situation and were content to give instructions in general terms without condescending to particulars".[9] In the course of the interview the Administrator again pressed for the release of more men for carrying on commerce. Again the Commandant refused. The Administrator said that the refusal left him with no alternative but to report, if the businesses did not open, that it was due to the Commandant's unwillingness to comply with the direction to the Administrator shown by him to the general. The Commandant agreed that was so.

The Commissioner did not consider that the Commandant was extending an invitation to the Administrator to disregard his oath of office, only that the time had come for the affairs of Port Moresby to be dealt with by the responsible persons on the spot.[1] Properly interpreted it amounted to an invitation by the Commandant to the Administrator to concur with him in the view that the instruction which the Administrator had received from the Department of External Territories that civil activities were to be resumed was unrealistic and one which, in the circumstances, could not and ought not to be carried out.

The sanity of the military viewpoint was soon demonstrated. On 3rd February Port Moresby was attacked for the first time. About six aircraft, four of them in arrowhead formation, with one in the lead and one bringing up the rear bombed from an altitude of about 8,000 feet between

[8] A record of the interview was made at the time by the Crown Law Officer, and subsequently tendered as evidence before the Commission of Inquiry. "The whole conversation," recorded the Crown Law Officer, "was upon a very dignified and restrained level and with the utmost courtesy. The only time there was any departure was when the general put his head down and said 'Bah, these stores,' when the question of normal business requirements was under discussion."

[9] Barry Report, p. 15. Murray said afterwards that so long as he held office and civil law ran in Papua, he could not avoid his duty to uphold its main features and to administer in accordance with his oath of office. He had no precedent to guide him or any instructions from Canberra to assist him.

[1] After the interview the Administrator advised his Minister, Senator Fraser, who was also Assistant Minister for the Army, of General Morris's proposals. He received no release from his legal obligations, and in fact no reply at all. He was convinced, he added, that as soon as he "faulted" himself "by acting illegally, it would have been said 'Murray is acting illegally, he has panicked and lost his head' or words to that effect".

3.10 and 3.40 a.m. in clear moonlight. At least 21 bombs were dropped in the Ela Beach, Kela and Seven Mile areas. The ground defences remained silent; minor damage was suffered to some civilian premises and one serviceman was killed and two were wounded.[2]

A second raid occurred about the same time on 5th February, the leading plane approaching from the south over Paga Point. It made a reconnaissance run over the town, R.A.A.F. hangar and Konedobu, circled twice over the harbour in a west to south direction, and then about 3.35 led in two flights each of three planes in stepped-down echelon formation. When they passed over Paga Point the leading plane emitted two red flares which curved slowly to earth under an overcast sky as the two formations broke into a straight line for their bombing run. Twenty-one bombs were dropped; nine fell harmlessly in the water, but four fell on the town near the harbour, another four on land at Konedobu, and four around the western end of Ela Beach. There were no casualties, but a number of buildings were destroyed, including Burns Philp's offices and their retail and bulk stores, the post office and army offices and quarters. Civilian dwellings on Ela Beach, Paga Hill and Douglas Street were also demolished. There were no casualties, and once again no response from the ground. Next day about ten craters were also found at the Bomana gaol gardens.

The pattern of events at Rabaul had by now been well established. At Port Moresby there was an almost universal belief that the bombings were a prelude to invasion. Natives fled inland after the first raid and coastal shipping was immobilised through lack of crews. Many of the 300 strong Royal Papuan Constabulary deserted but about 70 remained at their posts; some native prisoners were either released or escaped from Bomana Prison.

Some thieving and lawlessness had become apparent before the air raids, but after the second raid had damaged stores and given them a derelict appearance looting became widespread.

> Crowds of soldiers looted homes and shops, both day and night, using trucks (said a former A.D.O. later).[3] There was only one civilian policeman, and no army picquets or sentries were put on town. Captain Fitch of the Steamship Trading Company caught an officer walking off with his golf clubs from the shipping company's offices. They took refrigerators and wireless sets. Damage was done by men throwing silks, etc. about and breaking bottles. The bulk store of liquor was looted and taken into the bush. There was no wild revelry in town; it took place out in the bush. It was safe to enter town in early part of night. All this time Government officials came into their offices during daytime under Murray. But he gave no lead. Officials just sat around waiting.

The Commandant was hampered by the poor quality of his military police and by the general conviction that the stores in the forthcoming invasion would either be destroyed by air attack or bombardment or fall into enemy hands. The contents were therefore stripped of much of the sanctity which applies to private property in peacetime.

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[2] Between 3rd February 1942 and 20th September 1943, when the last raid was made, the Japanese carried out 113 air attacks on Port Moresby.

[3] Captain F. P. Brewer, of Angau, in an interview.

Meanwhile on 4th February the Administrator had received a long personal telegram from Mr Halligan, who from many years of experience had become a kind of father-confessor to senior officials in the territories.[4] The telegram sought his personal views and recommendations on whether the time had arrived for the functions of the administration to be suspended or transferred to the army. The Administrator summoned the Executive Council and other officers to a meeting. There was no longer room for doubt. Their unanimous decision that it was "neither necessary nor possible to maintain the administration" was communicated to the Department of External Territories in Canberra that day.

Other informed people, including members of the New Guinea Service, who had now arrived in Australia, supported the Administrator's recommendation, and on the 6th the Administrator was advised that the Government had authorised temporary cessation of civil administration in Papua. The Army would take over complete control. Advice would follow about any legal action necessary in connection with the relinquishment of civil service duties of the Administrator and other officers. The agendum which the War Cabinet had before it when reaching its decision that the Army should take over had been drafted by the Chiefs of Staff. The local knowledge it contained, however, plainly revealed that General Morris had had his say.

> Civil administration in Australian Territories are unacquainted with the rigours of war, and are unprepared to take responsibility for initiating action demanded by necessities of war unless they are fully covered by precise documentary authorisation from Canberra to take specific action. It is physically impossible for anyone at Canberra to foresee the very many important problems that must arise in Moresby and give the Administrator the "cover" that he obviously desires. The delay in referring to Canberra these many matters (no doubt of major importance in peace) that become matters of ordinary concern in war, may make all the difference between success and failure of the defence of Moresby.
>
> It is abundantly clear that the time has now arisen when complete control must be taken over in Moresby by the senior officer of the fighting services stationed there, viz, Major-General Morris. The civil administration should continue to function under the general direction of Morris and assist him in every way possible. Any other control is likely to hinder arrangements for the defence of Moresby.[5]

The Administrator had evidently reached the conclusion that the cessation of the civil administration would mean his withdrawal from the territory. On the 4th he had telegraphed the department that "if withdrawal administration approved grateful you assist providing transport". On the 6th he sent a further telegram requesting that Army Headquarters instruct the Commandant that Bignold and other officers should accompany him when the administration was withdrawn. On the 9th he received a reply dated 7th February from the Department of External Territories.

> Regulations are being prepared (the message said) to give effect to the decision for a temporary cessation of civil government of Papua. Regulations will take the

[4] Halligan had been associated with the administration of New Guinea since 1922, and had been in charge of the Territories Branch of the Prime Minister's Department from 1941. When the Department of External Territories was created in June, Halligan was appointed Assistant Secretary, the titular head of the Department being the Secretary, Prime Minister's Department.

[5] War Cabinet Agendum No. 82. 5 Feb 1942.

form of National Security Territories Emergency Regulations and will vest in the Commandant 8th Military District power to give any directions or orders necessary to existing circumstances even though such directions or orders inconsistent with existing laws of the Territory. This does not mean that you and other officers of Administration have been instructed to leave your appointments and withdraw from the Territory. The effect of the Regulation will be that the Commandant will have supreme control of all Territory affairs and that all persons in the Territory including yourself and officers of Administration and members of Executive and Legislative Council are subject to the directions of the Commandant. Whether you or any officer of the Administration will be required to perform duties in the Territory as directed by the Commandant or whether you may leave the Territory will be matters for the decision of the Commandant. Please show this to and confer with Commandant on above basis and advise results.

The Administrator regarded the terms of this telegram as "extremely humiliating". He considered that it ill-befitted the status of the representative of the Crown in Papua that a military authority in the territory should be empowered to order the immediate departure of the civil administration or to compel officers of the administration to do anything else he thought fit. He felt also that the text of the telegram implied that the members of the civil administration were straining to escape from the territory and their responsibilities.

The Administrator was in an unhappy position, made the worse by his conscientious attempts to obey unrealistic and imprecise instructions from Canberra. He was the senior representative of the Government in the Territory and in more leisured circumstances a more formal method of terminating his appointment would undoubtedly have been employed. The telegram was prepared under the pressure of urgent and unprecedented events and its terms may have seemed ill-chosen. It is most unlikely, however, that any reflection on the Administrator's courage or that of his senior officers was intended.

The Administrator saw the Commandant as directed and learnt that he desired the Administrator, the Judge and members of the Executive and Legislative Councils to leave the territory. Morris was prepared to assume control at once. All men over 45 would be compulsorily evacuated.

The Administrator telegraphed his department to this effect on the 10th and requested instructions. On the 12th February National Security (Emergency Control) Regulations were notified in the *Commonwealth Gazette* providing that for the purpose of meeting any emergency arising out of the war the Minister for the Army could declare that the regulations should apply to any part of Australia as from a date specified in a notice published in the Gazette. Regulation 5 provided that—

The Senior officer of the military forces for the time being exercising any command in any part of Australia to which these Regulations apply . . . may do or may cause or direct to be done any act or thing which he thinks necessary for the purpose of meeting any emergency arising in that part out of the war or for the purpose of providing for the defence of that part.

Regulation 6 required all persons to comply with the Senior Officer's direction. These regulations were applied to the Territory of Papua by

notice published in the *Commonwealth Gazette* on 12th February. That day the Commandant instructed the Administrator that under powers derived from these regulations he required the Administrator, the members of the Councils and the Judge to leave for Australia at the earliest opportunity. The Administrator, still seeking to follow a proper course, again telegraphed his department; he saw the Commandant next morning and said that he was awaiting instructions; he could not leave without being relieved of his responsibilities. With a view to resolving the situation the Administrator suggested that the Commandant should place him, members of the Councils and the Judge under formal arrest. The Commandant declined to do so. Later in the day the Administrator learned of the passing of the above regulations and became aware that supreme power in the territory had passed to the Commandant. Next day he obtained the Commandant's signature to a document instructing that he and the remaining members of the Executive Council should leave the territory. The Administrator caused to be published a *Gazette Extraordinary* which contained a public notice in the following terms:

> His Honour the Administrator desires it notified for public information that pursuant to a decision of the Commonwealth Government, Civil Government in the Territory of Papua temporarily ceased at noon on the 14th day of February according to standard time in the Territory of Papua. His Honour the Administrator desires it further notified that, from that time, the General Officer Commanding the 8th Military District assumed supreme control of the said Territory.
>
> H. W. Champion
> Government Secretary

On 15th February the Administrator and members of the Councils left by flying boat for Australia. The Judge had left the previous day. On the 15th the Commandant issued an order under which he assumed all governmental powers.[6]

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[6] The legal position relating to what has been loosely described as the suspension of the civil administration in Papua is set out in Barry's report, pp. 47-8.

"The legal source of the Government of the Territory," he declared, "is the Papua Act 1905-1940, a Statute of the Parliament of the Commonwealth, and the instruments of the Government created by that Statute continue until terminated in accordance with law.

"The mere proclamation of martial law, assuming the circumstances were sufficient to justify the exercise of the prerogative, would have had no legal effect, for such a proclamation is 'the statement of an existing fact rather than the creation of that fact'. A proclamation of martial law made because an invasion of the Territory was apprehended would not have suspended the exercise of legislative authority 'which may or ought to continue to act as long as the public exigencies require'. If the state of affairs in the Territory was such that undivided control by the military authorities was necessary, the only method by which that position could be satisfactorily brought about was by means of an executive measure such as the National Security (Emergency Control) Regulations, which would take effect notwithstanding any Statute. (National Security Act 1939-43, Section 18.)

"As the Senior Officer of the military forces in Port Moresby, the Commandant possessed the widest powers under the Regulations and it was competent for him to require the Administrator and the civilians concerned with the civil administration to leave the Territory. In the exercise of his judgment he did so, and it was this action that in fact brought the civil administration to an end. The public notice gazetted by the Administrator on 14th February 1942 does not appear to me to have had any legal effect, except as evidence that, in the Administrator's opinion civil government in the Territory had ceased at noon on 14th February 1942. Legally the Civil administration was not suspended by the Emergency Control Regulations nor did Telegram No. 44 [dated 6th February, advising that the Government had authorised temporary cessation of civil administration] have that effect. The factual cessation of the civil administration resulted from the circumstances that the persons legally entitled to carry on the civil government relinquished their functions and left the Territory. Their departure was in compliance with an instruction which, by virtue of the terms of the Regulations, they were bound to obey. On the day of the Administrator's departure, the Commandant, in the exercise of his powers under the Regulations, issued an order under which he assumed the powers of the Administrator and the Legislative Council and all other governmental powers. Whatever the legal effect of that order may have been, the Commandant's powers under the Emergency Control Regulations were sufficient to enable him to administer the Territory thereafter."

There remained the vital question of the native population. McMullen expressed the view of the New Guinea Administration in a radio message from Wau to his department on 9th February.

> Strongly recommend that civil administration operate this territory to the last. New Guinea Volunteer Rifles not capable of administering native population. Consider utter chaos would result if the civil administration should cease.

The Administrator of Papua was afterwards criticised because he held opposing views.

> In none of his communications with the authorities in Australia . . . did the Administrator advert to the consequences which would result to the natives from the withdrawal of the white administration officers from the Divisions in which they maintained law and order and such native welfare services as had been instituted.[7]

Murray, who felt this criticism keenly, said afterwards that he and his advisers were of the opinion that little real harm would have been suffered by the natives through the temporary withdrawal of the white officers.

> An integral part of our native policy in Papua has been to keep every native's village rights intact (he declared). His house, land, garden, fishing and hunting rights were scrupulously preserved. . . . There were no detribalised natives dependent on the white man to live as are found in large numbers in other countries. In any crisis natives who were away from their villages could return to them and resume their village life.
>
> The temporary cessation of civil administration meant, in our considered opinion, that natives would resume their ordinary village life in which they were self-supporting, and in which they were considerably controlled by tribal sanctions. Government control had been so effective and complete for many years that we felt confident that its impetus would serve for some time to prevent any serious outbreak of tribal fighting.
>
> So far as native welfare was concerned, we were mindful of the facts that the missions had not been compelled to cease, or been rendered impotent, nor had they been ordered out of the Territory. They have always been partners of the Papuan Administration in the work of native welfare and their work was continuing.
>
> When war operations came to any district we considered that the natives' ability to live on the land, their unrivalled knowledge of bushcraft and their mobility ensured them a degree of safety which could not have been increased by the presence of white officers.[8]

General Morris, however, took the opposite view. Indeed, the Administrator in his final paragraph, listed cogent reasons why the army should create an organisation which would enable it to employ the natives as fighting men, scouts and labourers. Experience was to prove that the support of the natives was to be of immense value.

On 7th February the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Major-General S. F. Rowell, signalled to Morris that the Chiefs of Staff had requested clarification of the Cabinet decision in order to ensure that administration and staff, including District Officers, would remain at their posts and

[7] Barry report, pp. 54-5.
[8] Murray, letter to Minister for External Territories, 12 Jun 1945.

render the assistance required to carry on civil and native administration. Rowell presumed that, after consultation with the Administrator, Morris had established working arrangements and decided what civil personnel were to remain in their present posts. Morris replied on the 8th that

> as soon as civil administration Papua ceases I propose also institute military administration under myself Territory of New Guinea remaining to us. Consider essential district officers remaining loyally doing good work various centres should have some head to look to. Will appoint small staff of previous administration officers for each territory. Please confirm.

In a later message that day Morris declared that he was "quite prepared to carry on civil and native administration under existing ordinances as soon as Murray goes. All arrangements completed. Propose enlisting certain civil staff and promoting to warrant rank. . . . Personally consider the sooner the change-over is effected the better for war effort here."[9]

Morris's contention in a message of 10th February to the Chief of the General Staff that "control of natives all areas practically non-existent and anxious regain control and obtain renewal of confidence" was an exaggeration of the facts, but perhaps permissible in the circumstances if the end is considered to justify the means.[1]

Because military operations would be dependent in many respects on native labour, the Papuan Administrative Unit and the New Guinea Administrative Unit, afterwards merged as A.N.G.A.U., were conceived. Henceforward the civil administration functioned in army uniform. The Commandant announced the new arrangement in a message to all magistrates on 16th February.[2]

The Port Moresby episode provided an interesting example of the problems which the civilian encounters in the face of the enemy. Certain lessons of continuing value emerged. On the one hand is the need for the civil government to recognise that in war military requirements are paramount and to adapt the machinery of government to meet those requirements. On the other hand the military authorities should recognise their obligation to keep the civil administration fully informed of the military situation. They should be precise and definite in their requests and be guided by the views of the civil government on the local civilian situation, but not beyond the point where those views might detract from the military effort.

The Administrator and the senior members of the administration were unwitting victims of the failure to devise plans for cooperation with the army. Years of indifference on the part of the Commonwealth and the

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[9] Signals A2194 and A2199, 8 Feb.

[1] The difficulties which arose with the town natives were not general. A report, for example, by Melrose, who arrived at Kokoda on 9th February, testified to the conditions at Buna and Kokoda stations. Hs observed that "village life was functioning normally and the ordinary machinery of government so far as the native administration was concerned had not been disturbed in any way either by the attacks on Salamaua or on Moresby".

[2] The message read: "Carry on as usual. Vigorous patrolling to be carried out. Establishment embodies all into Army and will be increased. Instructions re Army pay and establishments and all allotments to dependants will be effected at an early date. Morale amongst RPC must be maintained. Endeavour recruit additional RPC's. Ranks will be RM's captain, ARM's lieutenants, PO's warrant-officers. Dependants will be provided for. Await further instructions."

pattern of life in the territory left them ill-prepared to cope with sudden emergencies without guidance from Canberra. There were signs also that the stores and trading concerns in the town found it difficult to adapt themselves to the needs of the military forces preparing to resist an invader. A fundamental difference in outlook between the soldier and civilian was evident. The one, as part of his training, must turn to account anything that comes to hand—if he does not the enemy will; the other held peacetime beliefs about the sanctity of personal property which could not be put lightly aside.

The time for the rehabilitation of the territory was in the future—after Australia had learned its importance the harsh way, at the cost of the lives of many young men and almost universal hardship on the part of those who fought there. Meanwhile Angau had arisen as an essential and invaluable body to meet the requirements of the times. It was a military unit, however, and when army requirements conflicted with the welfare of the indigenous people, their welfare became of secondary importance. Means were afterwards devised for compensating them for the broken promises and hardships that sometimes became their lot.[3]

In the following three years and a half the European and the native peoples of the New Guinea territories made a contribution to the military effort that was out of all proportion to the numbers of those who were actively involved. Their story is told in part in the Army volumes of this history. By the end of the war there were some 350 officers and 1,600 other ranks in Angau. Perhaps two-thirds of the officers were old New Guinea hands.[4] At this stage some 35,000 natives were working under contract to the Army, generally under the supervision of Angau men. Many other natives were working as locally-recruited labourers, and far and wide whole tribes were engaged in guerilla warfare against the Japanese, generally under European leadership but sometimes independently. By 1945 four New Guinea Infantry Battalions and the Papuan Infantry Battalion were in existence, plus the Royal Papuan Constabulary; the combined strengths of these fighting units included about 6,500 native troops.

[3] The Australian Government took steps to ensure full reparation to natives who had suffered as a result of the war. The pertinent features of their plan implemented in 1946 were to honour promises, relieve hardship and to pay compensation for all property lost, damaged or destroyed, as well as for loss of life and personal injuries sustained in war operations.
A War Damage Compensation Scheme made similar provision for other civilians.

[4] It is impossible to be precise because many were enlisted on the mainland and therefore were not allotted "P" or "NG" numbers.

APPENDIX 3

THE RETURN OF THE A.I.F. AND ITS USE IN THE AUSTRALIAN THEATRE

THE following details of the movements of the various Australian formations from Egypt to Australia in the early part of 1942 will enable the reader to relate the narrative of the political decisions to the position of various units of the A.I.F. at various times.

The liner *Orcades*, carrying several units, including the 2/3rd Machine Gun and 2/2nd Pioneer Battalions, the 2/6th Field Company and the 2/2nd Casualty Clearing Station, reached Batavia on 16th February. The units disembarked on the 18th, and were the only Australian units from the Middle East to disembark in Java. *Orcades* sailed for Colombo on the 21st.

A convoy carrying the 21st Brigade Group[1] and other units reached Bombay on 6th February, transhipped to smaller vessels, and from 13th to 21st February steamed towards Java. On the 21st (as a result of decisions recorded in Chapter 2) the convoy—5 transports and 6 cargo ships—changed course for Rangoon, but on the 23rd changed course again for Colombo. The ships reached Colombo on 25th February and Adelaide on 23rd and 24th March.

The 25th Brigade Group sailed from Suez on 9th February, reached Colombo on the 18th, remained there six days, and reached Adelaide on 9th March. The 18th Brigade Group sailed from Suez on 12th February, reached Colombo by way of Bombay on 1st March, sailed on 6th March and reached Adelaide on the 27th. Thus by the end of March the 7th Division was concentrated in South Australia.

Ships containing the units of the 19th Brigade Group, the leading brigade of the 6th Division, sailed from Suez on 13th, 16th and 19th February, and reached Adelaide by way of Colombo between 16th and 28th March.

The remaining brigades of the 6th Division—the 16th and 17th—reached Colombo on 25th March. They were disembarked there, reorganised as "A.I.F. Ceylon" under Major-General A. J. Boase, and deployed in defence of part of the island. They sailed from Ceylon on 13th July and disembarked in Australia early in August.[2]

It is necessary, too, to outline what happened to these formations afterwards in view of the unfounded criticism that they were not used fully in the Australian theatre. The 21st Brigade was sent to Papua to help meet the Japanese advance from Kokoda and was pushed back. The 18th

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[1] The main formations concerned in the "Stepsister" movement were: the I Corps, 6th Division (16th, 17th, 19th Brigades), and 7th Division (18th, 21st and 25th Brigades). Corps and other units about equal in strength to a third division were also included. This account records the movements only of brigade groups and the contingent in the *Orcades*.

[2] The 16th Brigade landed on 8th August, embarked for New Guinea on 13th September, and was in action on the Kokoda Trail on 20th October. They had been away for 2 years and 7 months. Not all of them had 14 days' leave before departing for New Guinea.

Brigade was sent to Milne Bay and fought there. The 25th and 16th Brigades replaced the 21st Brigade in the Owen Stanleys and pushed the Japanese back to the north coast. The 18th and 21st Brigades joined them there.

By February 1943 each of these brigades had been reduced to a few hundred sick men. Most of the two United States divisions in Australia had been sent to the Buna-Sanananda area, on the north Papuan coast, but had proved inadequate. Except for one regiment they were not sent into action again until 1944.

There remained the 17th Brigade which was flown to Wau in January-February 1943 to counter the last Japanese offensive; and the 19th which was in the Northern Territory, except for one battalion in Western Australia. Thus the *effect* of the Government's insistence on "A.I.F. Ceylon" returning was to bring them to a theatre where they were soon urgently needed.

In April 1943 a militia division (incorporating the 17th Brigade) took over the front in New Guinea. (In 1942 three militia brigades had been in action, generally beside A.I.F. brigades.)

In September 1943 the New Guinea offensive was opened by the 7th Division (restored after the Owen Stanleys-Buna fighting) and the 9th Division (back from El Alamein) plus militia battalions.

In December 1943 with the landing on New Britain by the 1st United States Marine Division and other troops and, later, the landing in the Admiralties by the 1st Cavalry Division, the United States Army took over the main role in the South-West Pacific Area.

APPENDIX 4

THE "BRISBANE LINE"—A STUDY IN WARTIME POLITICS

IN the course of an electioneering campaign in Victoria in October 1942, the Minister for Labour and National Service, Mr Ward, was reported to have stated that when the Curtin Government took office there was in existence a plan, formulated by its predecessors, for the abandonment of an important section of northern Australia without firing a single shot.[1] Messrs Menzies, Fadden, Hughes, McEwen and McBride, all members of the two previous Governments, made public statements denying the allegation. On 12th November they also expressed their serious concern in the Advisory War Council. Menzies referred to the special difficulty presented by the fact that the statement had been made by a responsible Minister and that it could be answered only by a complete exposition of secret military plans—a disclosure that no one was in a position to make. At this meeting the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, told the Council that he had sent a telegram to Ward, that he would see him on the subject, and that Ward should not have made the statement.[2]

It can only be assumed that Curtin was unable to discipline his Minister, for Ward kept on repeating the statement with minor variations and by May 1943 his allegation had taken the form of a statement that a line—the "Brisbane Line"—had been drawn north of Brisbane and that the Menzies and Fadden Governments had the "defeatist plan" of withdrawing behind this line in the event of an invasion.

During the public controversy which followed, the members of the Opposition found a further cause for complaint in the fact that the Prime Minister, who as a member of the Advisory War Council under the previous administration would have been in a position to know what was or was not planned, still did not publicly disavow Ward's charges but, by his silence, seemed to give them credence. After repeated protests to him by the Leader of the Opposition (Fadden), Curtin did write to Fadden on 27th May saying: "On Japan coming into the war the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces submitted to the Minister for the Army proposals relating to the defence of Australia, the essence of which was concentration on the defence of the vital parts of Australia. This involved holding what is known as the Brisbane Line." Elsewhere in his letter, which was widely published in the metropolitan press of 28th May, Curtin mentioned that the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces had been appointed by the Menzies Government, and that his submission had been rejected by the Curtin Government which "took steps to defend the whole of the continent".

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[1] *Argus*, 27 Oct 1942.
[2] Advisory War Council Minute 1102, 12 Nov 1942.

This absence of an outright disavowal of Ward's charge and the linking of the Menzies Government with the name of the general who had put up the plan was regarded by the Leader of the Opposition as "a cunning piece of evasion".[3]

During early June 1943 there was warm discussion of the subject in the Advisory War Council and at one time it seemed as though the non-Government members might leave the Council in protest if the public discrediting of them by a Minister was not corrected. In response to a request made by Fadden in a letter of 28th May, and by Spender, a former Minister for the Army, at a meeting of the Council on 13th May[4] the Prime Minister produced War Cabinet and Advisory War Council records to a meeting of the Advisory War Council in Sydney on 3rd June.

In the meantime, in the course of a broadcast from a commercial radio station on 1st June, Ward had said: "I do not withdraw one word of what I have said about the Brisbane Line", and "I lay two charges against the Menzies and Fadden Governments—first, I charge them with creating a position in this country which necessitated the contemplation of such a defeatist plan, and secondly, I charge them with becoming so panic stricken as the threat of invasion increased, that they turned to a treacherous plan under which large portions of Australia were to be given away to the enemy."[5]

In the course of the Council meeting on 3rd June, according to the official minute, Curtin said that the only plan relating to the Brisbane Line of which he had knowledge was that submitted by the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces, Lieut-General Sir Iven Mackay, in February 1942; that Ward had no access to the relevant documents; and there had been no leakage of information from Ministers on the War Cabinet and the Advisory War Council. Non-Government members stated that the documents disproved Ward's allegations by showing that the plan which had been attributed by Ward to the Menzies and Fadden Governments was made in February 1942, four months after Curtin took office. The Prime Minister should make it clear that no such plan had existed during the term of office of the Menzies and Fadden Governments.

During discussion in the Council reference was also made to the plans for the evacuation of the civil population and essential industry from vulnerable areas, which had been discussed by the Advisory War Council and the Premiers of the States in February 1942, and to evacuation plans which were consequently formulated in Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. These plans had also been mentioned in the public controversy arising from Ward's charges, but Council members observed, first, that the plans related to civil evacuation of potential battle areas (not to the military abandonment of a territory) and nothing had emanated from them which bore any relation to the strategic conception

[3] *Argus*, 28 May 1943.
[4] Advisory War Council Minute 1198, 13 May 1943.
[5] The full text of the broadcast is in the *Century*, 4 Jun 1943, p. 7.

of the "Brisbane Line" to which Ward referred; second, these plans, too, belonged to the period of February 1942, and not to the term of office of the Menzies and Fadden Governments.

Non-Government members referred to the difficulty they had in refuting the charges of Ward in regard to the state of the forces during the term of office of the Fadden Government without revealing information of value to the enemy. When the question was raised of tabling the papers relating to the "Brisbane Line" the Prime Minister objected that it was important in wartime to keep faith with the military leaders, that the secrecy of the information in the papers would preclude the tabling of the documents and that it would be unfair to the Chiefs of Staff, as the Government's military advisers, to publish the advice they had tendered.[6]

During a no-confidence debate in the House of Representatives on 22nd June, Fadden again called on the Prime Minister to repudiate the "slanderous campaign" conducted by Ward, but Curtin replied with a general description of the situation that had confronted his own Government when Japan attacked. Menzies pressed the point harder: "I put this to the Prime Minister: Every record of the Department of the Army and every relative record of the Advisory War Council have been searched, and there is no such plan before February 1942. That is a fact." Curtin answered by interjection: "I said that. I stated that the plan was put to my Government."[7]

Later in the debate, Ward, while "not contradicting or denying that the available records disclose that the first plan was dated 4th February 1942", added that he was "most reliably informed that one important report is now missing from the official files".[8]

After receiving a certificate from the departmental officers concerned and an assurance from the Minister for the Army (Forde), the Prime Minister stated in the House on 24th June that all the records of the War Cabinet, the Advisory War Council, Army Department and Defence Department were complete and no unauthorised person had ever had access to them. He added: "The information given to the Minister for Labour and National Service is therefore incorrect. The Minister for the Army and I have discussed the matter with [Mr Ward], who withdraws the statement, which he made in the belief that it was made on reliable information."

The "withdrawal" by Ward, however, was equivocal. He said: "Last night I conferred with the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Army. In the course of the talk I received an assurance from [Mr Curtin] that no document is missing from the files. I unreservedly accept that assurance and I am satisfied that the document to which I was referring on Tuesday night is still in existence. My references to the document have been seized upon by members of the Opposition as a device for disguising the real

[6] Advisory War Council Minute 1202, 3 Jun 1943.
[7] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, p. 38.
[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, pp. 57-8.

issue. The real issue is whether my charges against the former Prime Ministers are or are not true. These charges still stand."[9]

During a debate on a motion for the adjournment of the House, moved by Spender, Curtin, who was clearly embarrassed, repeated that no document was missing and that the information given to the Minister was incorrect. The motion for the adjournment failed by 28 to 29, after Coles, the Independent, had been noticed to hesitate before voting with the Government. Fadden immediately gave notice of a motion for a Royal Commission.[1] Later in the evening Coles advised Curtin of his opinion that an inquiry should be granted. In debate on a motion to resolve the House into a Committee of Supply it also became obvious that the Opposition would use Ward's allegations as the grounds for a further challenge to the Government and, late at night, Curtin announced that he was ready to constitute a Royal Commission of Inquiry and that Ward had been asked to refrain from carrying on his duties until the report of the Royal Commission was tabled in Parliament. At a still later stage of the meeting of the House Curtin indicated his intention to ask for an almost immediate dissolution.[2]

Mr Justice Lowe of the Supreme Court of Victoria was appointed Royal Commissioner to inquire into and report on the following matters:

1. The statement "I am most reliably informed that one important report is now missing from the official files" made by the Minister of State for Labour and National Service in the House of Representatives on the 22nd June 1943, in the course of the debate in that House concerning the matter known as "The Brisbane Line".

2. The question whether that Minister was informed in the terms or to the effect specified in the statement set out above.

3. If that Minister was so informed—

(*a*) the particulars of the information given to that Minister and referred to in the statement set out above; and

(*b*) the questions as to the person by whom, the circumstances under which, and the reason why, that information was given to that Minister.

4. The question whether any document concerning the matter known as "The Brisbane Line" is missing from the official files specified in the statement set out above and, if so, the particulars of the document.[3]

Before the Commission had been issued, Ward had taken the stand that he was not a "squealer" and would not divulge the name of the person who had given him his information.[4] "All I ask for is that the Royal Commission which is to be set up shall be given the widest terms possible and that I be given a fair chance to give the country all the facts that I possess."[5] After the terms of the inquiry were announced he protested in the House, describing the inquiry as farcical and making it plain that what he wanted was an opportunity to repeat his charges about the

[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, p. 316.
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, pp. 316-26.
[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, pp. 333 and 353.
[3] *Commonwealth Gazette*, No. 141, 30 Jun 1943; *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, p. 572.
[4] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 and 28 Jun 1943.
[5] *Canberra Times*, 28 Jun 1943.

"Brisbane Line" and to prove "the responsibility of the Menzies-Fadden Government for the Brisbane Line strategy".[6]

At the outset of the Royal Commission's work, Ward's counsel, J. V. Barry,[7] submitted that the whole of the questions upon which Mr Justice Lowe was asked to report were beyond the power of the Commission to deal with, on the ground that they arose out of and necessarily depended upon a statement made by Mr Ward in Parliament. The Royal Commissioner, while recognising that parliamentary privilege debarred him from compelling Ward to attend or give evidence, ruled that it did not debar him from investigating the truth or otherwise of any aspersion upon persons who were not members of Parliament or officers of either House of Parliament. In the absence of any evidence from Ward, however, his findings were limited to the conclusions that the Minister was not informed by any officer who had the custody of the official files or by any member of the Defence Committee or by any of the Chiefs of Staff Committee; and that no document concerning the matter known as the "Brisbane Line" was on 22nd June 1943 or was now missing from the official files.

The Royal Commissioner did not investigate the contents of the files.

Mr Ward continued to repeat his various statements and charges against the Menzies and Fadden Governments up to and throughout the general election campaign of August 1943, and when the Cabinet was formed after the elections he was again a Minister.

The main points which emerge from a thorough examination of those papers which were placed before the Royal Commissioner and found by him to be complete, and of other War Cabinet and Advisory War Council papers, are:

First, that any proposals not to reinforce the defences of outlying parts of the Australian mainland but to concentrate on the defence of the vital areas were military proposals, emanating from a consideration of military factors and relating to the resources available and the military situation which was faced at a certain stage of hostilities, namely the situation in February 1942.

Second, the minutes of the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council show that no proposals of this kind came under the notice of these bodies until General Mackay's paper and General Sturdee's comments were presented in February 1942.

Third, these proposals were rejected by a political decision on which both Government and non-Government members were agreed.

Fourth, Curtin and the Labour Ministers who were members of the War Cabinet and had previously been members of the Advisory War Council under Menzies and Fadden are nowhere recorded in official papers as giving any support to Ward's charges or of raising any objection on the ground of fact to the categorical denial of those charges by Menzies and Fadden.

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[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 175, pp. 572-3, 30 Jun 1943.

[7] Hon Sir John Barry. Conducted inquiry into cessation of Papuan Administration in 1942; Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria 1947-69; senior Puisne Judge 1966-69. Of Armadale, Vic; b. Albury, NSW, 13 Jun 1903. Died 8 Nov 1969.

An examination of these and other records of the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council supports the opinion that, if there had been any discussions of this kind earlier than February 1942—and the documents do not disclose any evidence of such discussions—they would have been discussions at the level of military planning and would have been tentative and speculative, being directed towards an imagined contingency and not to an existing situation or to a situation that was in clear prospect. No evidence was discoverable that any such hypothetical case of the military abandonment of part of the continent ever reached the War Cabinet or Advisory War Council during the terms of the Menzies and Fadden Governments or that any political direction on the subject was ever given to the military planners. Up to the time the Curtin Government took office and for nearly two months afterwards the main subjects of political discussion regarding the defence of Australia in the event of war in the Far East were the strengthening of Singapore, British naval reinforcements, the aid of the United States Navy, the Malayan barrier, and the deterrent effect of the strength of the Soviet Union. The problem of the defence of the Australian mainland was still seen as being primarily a defence against raids. It was not until Japan had crippled the Allied navies, taken Singapore and was in process of reducing the Malay barrier and the prospect of Soviet intervention had faded, that the fears of an early large-scale invasion became real. In this new situation, and at a time when the expected aircraft supplies and naval and air reinforcements were lacking, the necessity of withdrawing from part of the continent was placed before Ministers by their military advisers.

As is shown in *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*,[8] the principle of concentrating defence on key industrial areas was one of long standing in the discussion of Australian defence and the army leaders had studied the application of the principle for many years. Any alert member of Parliament might well have known in general terms about such discussions. It could not be described as defence policy, however, for that policy, based on the strength of the British Navy and Singapore, assumed consistently that the role of the Australian Army would be primarily one of defence against raids, not against large-scale invasion. Defence against raids was the only role of the army mentioned in the appreciations that reached Governments from their senior military advisers up to the time when the enemy advance in Malaya and the capture of Rabaul, following heavy British and American naval losses, changed the whole basis of Australian defence policy.

Whether Ward's charges were justified or whether they were, as described by the Opposition, "a wicked invention" cannot be determined without stating them more precisely than he ever did. He created a bad impression rather than laying a definite charge. On one occasion he said that "during the term of the previous Federal Government a strategic plan was formed which included the sacrificing of part of northern Aus-

[8] By D. McCarthy, pp. 6-8, in the Army series of this history.

tralia to an invader". In that he would have been correct if he intended to convey that at various times and at various levels of military planning such plans had been made in application of the principle of concentration in defence. They were made during the term of previous Governments but not by them. When, however, he charged the Menzies and Fadden Governments with "responsibility" for such plans he was not justified for there is no record that any Government accepted such a plan or that such a plan was even considered by a Government before February 1942.

The way in which the charges were originally made and persistently repeated suggests that Ward was wilfully and maliciously distorting the truth in order to gain political advantage. The fact that he persisted in his charges to the embarrassment of his own party leader leaves the historian in some doubt as to whether the only advantage he was trying to gain was the besmirching of the Opposition parties on the approach of an election. The action of Ward in creating a false impression for political advantage was not novel. The novelty was in Curtin's conduct. His failure on this occasion to repudiate firmly suggestions which he must have known to be untrue fell below his customarily high standards of honesty and courage.

APPENDIX 5

THE AUSTRALIA FIRST MOVEMENT

IN March 1942 twenty arrests were made—four in Perth and sixteen in Sydney—of persons alleged to be connected or associated with the Australia First Movement. The four arrested in Perth were brought to trial in the Criminal Court on a charge of conspiracy to assist a public enemy and two of them were found guilty. The sixteen arrested in Sydney, the two acquitted in Perth and one other man subsequently arrested in Melbourne were detained for various periods by Ministerial orders given under National Security Regulations.

Subsequently a Commissioner, Mr Justice Clyne,[1] appointed under the National Security Regulations, inquired into some aspects of the case. He did not complete his work until 5th September 1945, after the war was over, and he then reported among other things that the recommendation for the detention of eight of the Sydney people was not justified.

The incident is of interest on several counts. It was one of the two cases in the second stage of the war in which the Australian authorities alleged subversive activity by an organisation. Since the entry of the Soviet Union into the war the Communist Party had become outwardly patriotic and, although it is clear that the policies it advocated from time to time on the conduct of the war were prompted by regard for what best suited the foreign policy of the Soviet Union rather than by regard for Australian interests, the effect of their advocacy was not found by the Government either to hamper the war effort or to be subversive.[2] In these circumstances the only organisations that attracted official attention were the Australia First Movement and a religious sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses. It becomes of interest to examine the Australia First Movement to find whether it represented any substantial or effective body of Australian opinion opposed to the war effort or was subject to any "foreign" direction or influence.

Second, the incident of the Australia First Movement affords the best opportunity in the second stage of the war for examining both the way in which matters of national security affecting the liberty of the subject were handled and the contemporary political and popular attitudes on such questions.

Third, the incident led to allegations of injustice to individuals and claims for personal compensation that were continued after the war ended and the question whether they were ever fully investigated or adequately considered by the Government is another aspect of any inquiry into the effect that wartime experience had on Australian thinking and behaviour on questions of civil rights.

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[1] Hon Sir Thomas Clyne. Judge, Federal Court of Bankruptcy 1942-67, Supreme Court of ACT 1943-45. Of Melbourne; b. 1887. Died April 1967.

[2] See *The Government and the People 1939-1941*, Appendix 3, "The Banning of the Communist Party", pp. 583-92.

Finally, the reputation both of the persons detained and of the persons or agencies who were associated with their detention has been the subject of many public statements and of some political controversy and it becomes part of the task of the historian to try to set down what happened as clearly as possible so that matters of reputation may be judged fairly.

First, the origins of the Australia First Movement should be examined. The central figure in its development was P. R. Stephensen. A Queensland Rhodes Scholar, his early activities after leaving Oxford appear to have been mainly literary; later, before Mr Justice Clyne, he described his occupation as "man of letters". He was associated with Jack Lindsay in the Fanfrolico Press in London in the 1920s and was co-editor with Lindsay in 1928-29 of the *London Aphrodite*, in which appeared prose, verse and drawings by Norman Lindsay, Hugh McCrae, Kenneth Slessor and other Australians who had been contributors to the magazine *Vision* conducted by Jack Lindsay and others in Sydney a few years earlier. Stephensen in this period tried his hand at satirical verse, fiction and literary criticism.

On his return to Australia in the early 'thirties he established in Sydney a publishing firm with himself as managing director. Perhaps his best known work is *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*, which he published in Sydney in February 1936. It brought together some material on Australian literature which had previously appeared in a literary magazine and he described the book on the title page as "An Essay Towards National Self-Respect". He based a fervent assertion of the need for a distinctive Australian culture on W. C. Wentworth's prophecy of 1823 that, should Britain one day decline in power,

> May this—thy last-born infant—then arise,
> To glad thy heart, and greet thy parent eyes;
> And Australasia float, with flag unfurl'd,
> A New Britannia in another world!

About the same time, he became associated with one W. J. Miles in the production of a monthly magazine *The Publicist*, the first number of which appeared in July 1936. Miles died in January 1942 before the detention of members of the group. Before Mr Justice Clyne, Stephensen gave evidence that Miles, a well-to-do man, was the proprietor and editor of *The Publicist* until shortly before his death and that he lost about £2,000 a year on the venture. He had been an anti-conscriptionist speaker in the war of 1914-18; he was described by Security officers as a pacifist and a rationalist.[3]

By the outbreak of war in 1939 *The Publicist* was conducting somewhat erratic and disordered propaganda, more vehement in protest than clear in exposition, for "Australia First". It was nationalist and consequently

[3] In 1915-1919 Miles had been an active supporter of *Ross's Magazine*, later *Ross's Monthly*, a socialist, anti-militarist, anti-clerical journal. In 1919 Ross was sentenced to imprisonment for six months on a blasphemy charge. On appeal the penalty was reduced to a fine of £50. As an outcome Miles organised a petition to the Commonwealth for the repeal of the blasphemy laws, without immediate result. Later Miles became honorary secretary of the New South Wales Rationalist Press Association. See P. Coleman, *Obscenity Blasphemy Sedition: Censorship in Australia* (1962), pp. 96-100.

"opposed to so-called inter-nationalism". It was monarchical and scornful about democracy. Its interpretation of "pro-Australian" seemed to be that Australia should be against most other countries. It thought Australians were fooled by propaganda from overseas and it derided and abused what it called "the British garrison" in Australia for not putting Australian interests first. It was anti-Communist and anti-Jewish and seemed at times to equate Communist with Jew. It wanted to "eradicate the great colonial disease" of subservience to others. It appeared to think most people in politics were fools or shysters. It was erratic, declamatory and self-contradictory. In short, it was a soap box with the tatters of "literature" and "culture" hanging to it.

Early in the war *The Publicist* came under the notice of Publicity Censorship and in April 1940 an order to submit copy before publication was served on it. It appears to have given no further cause for concern and a report by Publicity Censorship, at the request of Military Intelligence, in March 1941, was made to the effect that there was nothing in the paper which would warrant its suppression.

It transpired that Military Intelligence had placed a "contact" within the group publishing the paper and Military Intelligence thought it saw indications of "incipient totalitarian propaganda". The Publicity Censor's report agreed that there were some persons associated with the paper who would "repay time spent in watching".

There were occasional articles that might be described as friendly to Japan and, as the paper also published serially a long extract from Hitler's writing, it might be thought that it was also sympathetic to him. Mr Justice Clyne's report referred to various pro-Japanese utterances ascribed to Stephensen himself. It should be remarked that these all belonged to a period before Japan entered the war and at a period when pro-Japanese sentiment was perhaps a corollary to anti-Russian and anti-Communist thought. One detects, too, the influence of the issues raised in Australia affecting Britain and Japan in 1936, during the trade diversion policy. *The Publicist*, read at a distance of some years, seems nationalistic, fascistic and rather disordered but not disloyal.

During 1940 *The Publicist* had started to advertise for men to communicate with it "with a view to the formation of an Australia-First Political Party after the war", and in the number for May 1940 published "Fifty Points of Policy for an Australia-First Party After the War". These were elaborated in an article by Stephensen in the number for August 1941, and the 50 points and the elaboration of them were reprinted in a pamphlet in the same month. This pamphlet, *Fifty Points for Australia*, appears to be directed to the "New Order" to be established after the war rather than to anything related to the conduct of the war. During that period there was a good deal of discussion both overseas and in Australia about post-war reconstruction and Allied war aims and at least half-a-dozen other printed discussions on the same subject were current in Australia. Some of the 50 points were clearly "fascist" in the popular

contemporary meaning of the term. The pamphlet advocated "national" forms of socialism as opposed to the "international" socialism of Russian Communists or Marxists; but it limited the field of socialism to those monopolies which are "too great to be entrusted to private enterprise", and elsewhere it advocated "private ownership against government encroachment" and "competition against monopoly". It advocated "strong government", "leadership" and "authority" and was against "anarchy", "dictatorship", "vacillation", "parliamentary careerism" and "demagogocracy". It stressed the need for "national unity" against "sectional disunity" and urged the "dissolution of all existing sectional political parties . . . and the creation of a new political structure to represent true National Unity and Australian Community Oneness. . . ." It believed that the Government should "control" and "regulate" the "sectional propaganda possessed by plutocrats and bureaucrats who control wireless broadcasting stations and newspapers". It thought that journalists should be "compelled to act with a sense of public responsibility". It spoke of the need for "discipline". It deplored sentimental sympathy for criminals. It upheld "Aryanism" and was against "Semitism". It was strongly anti-Communist. The dominant note, however, was the assertion of an Australian nationalism. Perhaps the oddest contradiction in the pamphlet was the criticism of preferential and discriminatory tariffs and this is the only point in the pamphlet that by the utmost stretching might be regarded as putting forward a thesis favourable to the Japanese. If in places the pamphlet might be thought to be anti-British it could equally be argued that it was anti-foreign.

The Australia First Movement was formed in October 1941. The Commissioner, Mr Justice Clyne, recorded the events leading to its formation as follows:

> It appears from the evidence that the formation of the organisation known as the Australia First Movement came about in the following manner. In or about October 1941, a suggestion was made by some persons who were members of an association called the Women's Guild of Empire, which at the time was in abeyance, that there should be a merger of members of the Guild of Empire and of members of a group interested in a journal called *The Publicist* to form a new Movement. A ten-point manifesto was drawn up by P. R. Stephensen and this was intended to be the basis of the merger of the two groups. After a preliminary meeting P. R. Stephensen drafted a constitution and rules for the proposed Movement, and at another meeting on 20th October 1941, at which ten persons were present, the draft constitution was adopted. P. R. Stephensen said the Movement was a democratically elected organisation and he was democratically elected President.[4]

At this meeting L. K. Cahill and Adela Pankhurst Walsh were appointed organisers of the Movement and the ten-point manifesto was approved.

Among the points of this manifesto were the following:

(*a*) In view of the extreme gravity of the military situation abroad, and of the political situation at home, an Australia First Movement has been founded

[4] Parliamentary Paper, No. 46, 1945-46, *Inquiry into Matters Relating to the Detention of Certain Members of the "Australia First Movement" Group—Report of Commissioner (His Honour Mr Justice Clyne).*

in Sydney to arouse public opinion to the need of protecting Australia's vital interests during the coming post-war period.

(*b*) Affirming loyalty to the King and upholding established authority, law and order, the Australia First Movement calls upon all Australians to work for unity in internal policies and for Australian independence in external affairs.

(*c*) The Australia First Movement is opposed to sectional political parties and factions and urges the subordination of sectional and factional interests to the welfare of Australia First.

(*d*) The Australia First Movement will advocate, after the present war ends, an independent foreign policy for Australia, including the unrestricted right of the Australian Government to make war or peace at its own choice, to enter separately into agreements or treaties with any foreign powers, and to appoint Australian diplomatic representatives to any foreign countries.[5]

Previously the persons interested in *The Publicist* had been holding "regular but informal" meetings, calling themselves the Yabba Club. The meetings were open to any persons willing to attend. Military Intelligence had introduced its own "contact" into this group and received regular reports on what was said. These reports, which were later accepted by the Commissioner as "substantially true and accurate", although said to be untrue by members of the group, included views "calculated to foster feelings of hostility to Britain and to cause disaffection in Australia".

Such views, expressed before October 1941, do not appear to have any direct bearing on the official action taken in March 1942. At the time when they were made and in the circumstances then existing it would appear that Military Intelligence did not itself regard them as sufficiently serious to warrant any action by itself or to be worth bringing under the notice of higher authority. They may have had some effect, however, in influencing the opinions of Military Intelligence about the persons concerned when different circumstances arose.

How significant was the Australia First Movement? At this distance it seems to have been neither coherent nor purposeful. It was certainly not representative, well organised or possessed of much substance. According to its register of members, 65 persons became members. "The persons who became members of the Australia First Movement were, however, a strangely assorted set, some of whom were prone to adopt extreme opinions on any subject, but I am convinced," wrote the Commissioner, "that many of them had different views as to the objects of the Movement, and I am also convinced that the aims of the Movement as expressed by some members did not meet with the approval of other members."[6]

To further its objects the Movement arranged public meetings. Each of the meetings was attended by a shorthand writer from "Military Police Intelligence Section", a branch of the New South Wales police that cooperated with Army Intelligence, and a detailed report was made of everything that was said and done. Meetings were held weekly at the Australia Hall, Elizabeth Street, Sydney, from 5th November to 17th December. Police estimates of the audiences ranged from "fewer than

[5] Clyne report, p. 4.
[6] Clyne report, p. 5.

100" to 200. At the meeting on 17th December Stephensen announced that the next meeting would be on 7th January. There had been many interjections at some of the November meetings but it was not until the meeting on 17th December that the police reported "uproar".

The meetings were resumed on 7th January in the Adyar Hall, Bligh Street. Stephensen announced that Adela Pankhurst Walsh had resigned from the Movement. The police reported that the meeting was noisy at question time, but that no police action was warranted; about 100 attended.

On 27th January an "inquiry officer" who had joined the Movement reported to the Commonwealth Investigation Branch a members' conference that he had attended on the 24th. Stephensen had said that the total number of members was 60. The estimated loss through public meetings was £2 2s. The inquiry officer reported that "enthusiasm was lacking and a feeling of anxiety as to the Movement's slow progress was very noticeable".

In February a minute written on 13th December by the Solicitor-General, Sir George Knowles,[7] came before Dr Evatt. There is no indication of the reason for the delay. The minute read:

> Further police reports have come to hand regarding the meetings held by the Australia First Movement on 5th, 12th and 19th November in the Australia Hall, Sydney, being the first three meetings of the series of seven meetings proposed to be held by the Movement.
>
> The latest Police Report states that the Movement "is the genesis of a Fifth Column of a most virulent kind and, even though at present it does not appear to have a large following, there are definite signs of increasing interest".
>
> P. R. Stephensen, the sponsor of the Movement, stated, at the meeting held on 19th November, that its membership was less than 100. If that is so it appears remarkable that such a small Movement can hire halls, publish printed manifestos, pamphlets, etc. It has been suggested that Stephensen's publications have been financed from Nazi and Japanese sources.
>
> Inquiries were made some years ago as to the source from which Stephensen obtained finance to publish *The Publicist* and it was then ascertained that a Mr W. J. Miles was responsible and that the publication was costing him £4,000 per annum.
>
> Possibly, the Australia First Movement is being financed from the same source.
>
> There is nothing new in the idea of forming a non-party Party to advocate Australia First. It is noted that the leaders of the Movement, Stephensen, Cahill and Mrs Adela Walsh, are ex-Communists. Stephensen may be an idealist but there is reason to doubt the sincerity of Cahill and, particularly, of Mrs Walsh who, incidentally, with her husband, Tom, visited Japan shortly after the outbreak of the present war.
>
> Japan's entry into the war has altered the whole situation and, possibly, the Australia First Movement will now die a natural death. At the meeting held on 19th November, Stephensen made the following statement in reply to a question:
>
> > "Australia is not at war with Japan, thank goodness. I hope she never will be, but I do want to make this clear, that if Australia were to be involved in a war with Japan and dragged into it by Britain and U.S.A., then it would be my duty to fight against Japan, but, so long as there is peace between the two countries, I am going to speak for peace."
>
> When the reports of the meetings held since Japan entered the war come to hand, it will be possible to ascertain whether Stephenson has adopted a changed attitude

[7] Sir George Knowles, CBE. Solicitor-General 1932-46; Aust High Commissioner to South Africa 1946-47. B. Brisbane, 14 Mar 1882. Died 22 Nov 1947.

towards Pacific problems. Until then, it does not appear desirable to take any action with respect to the Australia First Movement.

This minute went to the Attorney-General with the following memorandum from the Assistant Secretary, Mr Castieau:[8]

> Since the attached minute was written, the international situation has changed the whole outlook of the promoters of the Australia First Movement.
>
> Reports of recent meetings show that P. R. Stephensen and L. K. Cahill are now exceedingly patriotic. In fact, Cahill has joined the A.I.F. and the pro-Japanese Mrs Adela Walsh has resigned from the Movement.
>
> The Director, Investigation Branch, has reported that Stephensen is rapidly losing heart in the Movement which was launched at a most inopportune time and at no time had even one hundred members.
>
> I recommend that the speeches at future meetings (if any) be not reported and that no further action towards declaring the Movement under the National Security (Subversive Associations) Regulations be taken.[9]

On 12th February this recommendation reached Evatt who wrote on it: "Continue reports as at present. H.V.E."

The Director of the Investigation Branch (of the Attorney-General's Department) was informed of this decision and the Premier of New South Wales was told of the Attorney-General's wish; but Knowles told the Director that, if the State Police continued to report future meetings, it did not seem necessary for the speeches to be reported in full by the Investigation Branch, as had been done at least on some occasions hitherto.

Also on 12th February the Sydney "Military Police Intelligence Section" recommended to the Commissioner of Police that the Movement should be declared unlawful by the Commonwealth authorities. Thus, just when Commonwealth law authorities, on information supplied by their Investigation Branch, were advising that the Movement's leaders were "exceedingly patriotic", the police who were engaged (side by side with a group of Army officers) on security work were advising that the Movement be declared unlawful. In view of the fact that responsibility for the eventual arrest of members of the Movement was taken by the Military Intelligence officers working with the "Military Police Intelligence Section" of New South Wales, it may be that this proposal to declare the Movement unlawful originated with them. There is no indication that the police and Army officers advising the Commissioner of Police in Sydney had any knowledge of any pronouncement by the Movement's leaders that was not available also to the Investigation Branch.

There was no public meeting of the Movement between 7th January and 5th February, when 130 were present. Edward Cory de la Roche Masey and Stephensen spoke along the usual lines. A police shorthand writer's note of the speeches was sent to the Crown Solicitor, Canberra, on the 12th by the Deputy Crown Solicitor, Sydney, who advised that he did not think that either speech was in contravention of Regulation

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[8] J. G. B. Castieau, CBE. Asst Secretary and Asst Parlty Draughtsman, Attorney-General's Dept 1939-46; Commonwealth Public Service Arbitrator 1946-55. B. Prahran, Vic, 17 Sep 1892. Died 2 Oct 1963.

[9] Attorney-General's Department, file W4888.

42(1)(a) of the National Security (General) Regulations and did not think that "any other provision of the legislation is appropriate". The Crown Solicitor, Mr Whitlam,[1] sent this to Knowles on the 16th and concurred in the opinion.

On 14th February Stephensen sent a circular to members urging them to get busy and informing them that a new series of public meetings would begin in the Adyar Hall on 19th February. About 150 attended that night, including members of the State police and of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch and (according to the Branch's "inquiry officer") a number of Communists and waterside workers.

Valentine Crowley was chairman of the meeting. He paid tribute to W. J. Miles who had died in January. Miles, he said, was a very wonderful man. He had started the Australia First Movement in the last war. He had "poured out his wealth and his energy and his thought and time to creating in this Australia a knowledge and a love and a willingness to make sacrifices for this place as a place and not as an unimportant part of another place". The logical successor to the great Miles was P. R. Stephensen. Crowley called on Masey to speak on Australian Nationalism. An interjector shouted that the Movement was a fascist organisation. There was a scuffle which rapidly developed into a serious brawl. Blows were exchanged, chairs overturned. A group of men rushed the platform. By the time the arrival of uniformed police had stopped the brawl Stephensen's face was covered with blood and there were many black eyes and cut faces. Stephensen said that the meeting would continue. After interjectors had prevented Stephensen from speaking for some minutes about half the audience walked out. Thereupon Stephensen spoke for about an hour. The reporter for the Investigation Branch wrote:

> Mr Stephensen, his face covered with blood and one of his eyes looking angry in more ways than one proceeded with his address in what developed into an awe-stricken silence. Only at the conclusion of his remarkable (under the circumstances) oration, did the people cheer. It was a good burst of applause, which may have been attributed to the man's personal physical and mental endurance, or otherwise.
>
> To a mere onlooker who appreciated the present national position, the whole of the proceedings seemed unnecessary and in bad taste.

In its report of the meeting, which occupied about 10 inches of a single column, the *Sydney Morning Herald* said that Stephensen had two teeth knocked out and had been kicked while he was held down by two men. After the meeting Stephensen had said that members of his Movement were patriotic Australians and would not be stopped by bashers.

The report of the meeting by the officer of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch contains some 10,000 words mostly comprising a verbatim note of Stephensen's speech. In the copy on the file of the Attorney-General's Department[2] some remarks by Stephensen are marked in blue pencil. They are: "[It is unreasonable to expect] one Ally to hang back while

[1] H. F. E. Whitlam. Crown Solicitor 1936-48. Of Canberra; b. Prahran, Vic, 3 Apr 1884. Died 8 Dec 1961.

[2] File W4888, Australia First Movement, Part II.

the other does the fighting." "[Australia declared war] on Japan for the purpose of helping Britain and the United States." "Instead of devoting so much energy to black-out and air raid precautions over Sydney, let us devote our energy to recalling 10,000 airmen to this country." "We will not have a lot of Yankee boloney put over here to the effect that the Americans are coming here to protect us. They are coming here for their own sake." "George Washington and his people made giant strides when they became independent." "[The Australia First Movement is the beginning of] the right idea, Australian Independence. I do not suggest that it should do anything in a manner that is ill-judged, certainly not anything to embarrass the Government of the country at a time of emergency or of war."

K. P. Bath, a citizen of some standing who was present in the audience, saw the demonstration "as an outrage against lawful public assembly and freedom of expression within the law" and, as a protest, he consented to take the chair at a public meeting to be held at Manly on 5th March. This appears to have been his only association with the Movement but it subsequently was the ground for his arrest.

When sending the report of the meeting of 19th February to Knowles the Director of the Investigation Branch recommended that the activities of the organisation should be restricted. On 4th March the Movement advertised in the press the meeting to be held at the Arcadia Theatre, Manly, next evening. Knowles directed the attention of Evatt to the advertisement, suggested that the control of public meetings was a matter for the "civil and police authorities", but added that if they did not take action perhaps the Commonwealth would consider the exercise of powers to prohibit a meeting under National Security (General) Regulations, No. 44(2). Evatt signed an order under this regulation and it was hurried to Sydney. On the 7th, however, the New South Wales Commissioner of Police, Mr MacKay,[3] wrote to Knowles returning Evatt's direction prohibiting the meeting and explaining that he had simply informed Stephensen that the meeting was banned on the ground that it might cause a breach of the peace; and Stephensen had placed a notice on the door of the theatre to that effect. About 200 people turned up but they left quietly. An officer of the Investigation Branch reported that the leader of the Manly Communists "and apparently a number of his friends" were among those who arrived for the meeting.

It is a matter for nice disputation whether, in such circumstances, the responsibility of authority is to protect a peaceful and lawful assembly from being disturbed by persons holding contrary views or whether its responsibility is to avoid public disorder by prohibiting the assembly or persuading its sponsors to cancel it. In normal times the weight of opinion would certainly be on the side of protecting a lawful assembly. The activities of the Australia First Movement were still lawful. The point, although it was often underlined by the aggrieved persons associated with

[3] W. J. MacKay. Commissioner of Police, NSW, 1935-48, Commonwealth Director-General of Security 1942. B. Scotland, 28 Nov 1885. Died 22 Jan 1948.

the Movement, loses most of its effect in the light of the statement by Mr Justice Clyne that, although the police intervened, the decision not to hold the meeting had the "concurrence" of Stephensen.

Meanwhile in the Senate on 6th March in reply to a question by Senator Collett it had been stated on behalf of the Attorney-General that the Movement's activities had been closely watched and a shorthand note taken of all proceedings. "Appropriate action has been and will be taken to restrict or prohibit any of the activities of this organisation or of any of its members which are deemed detrimental to national security." The members of the executive of the Movement were named.

On 12th March Knowles informed MacKay that "as a result of action taken earlier this week, the true objects and bona fides of the Movement will be ascertained". Thereafter the question of banning the organisation entirely or prohibiting all future meetings would be considered. The "action taken earlier this week" had been the detaining of the 16 people and the searching of their homes on 10th March.

During the period of activity through public meetings, the Australia First Movement was also preparing a draft manifesto. As finally approved and published, the manifesto does not appear to be open to security objection, nor does the advocacy by some members of the "right" to make a separate peace advance any thesis different from what Dr Evatt himself would have argued was within the constitutional powers of Australia.

In his remarks on Stephensen in his report the only reference by Mr Justice Clyne to a separate peace was by way of a quotation from a letter written by Stephensen in January: "As far as Australia is concerned I expect to see opinions growing in favour of (1) Recall of the A.I.F., (2) Independence from Britain, (3) Separate peace with Japan. It would be premature to advocate this third point at present, but I believe the nettle will have to be grasped sooner or later by responsible leaders of the Australian community."[4]

During this period Intelligence officers had continued to keep under observation persons associated with the Movement and to intercept and examine their correspondence. Apparently as the result of this interception of correspondence, the interest of Military Intelligence was aroused in certain persons in Western Australia who, apparently on their own initiative, had written to Miles and Stephensen to obtain information about the Movement. The Intelligence Section then "caused a man named Thomas" to make investigations in Western Australia. On the face of it, there does seem to be some reason for suspecting that Military Intelligence had not been able to find sufficient ground for a round-up of the Australia First people in Sydney as a risk to security and hopefully followed up the

[4] Report, pp. 17-18. Questioned before Clyne as to whether there was evidence that the Australia First people wanted to make a separate peace with Japan, Captain F. B. Blood, who was in charge of investigations into the Movement on behalf of Military Intelligence, said that he was sure that there were reports to that effect; that they would be reports from people within the Movement. In reply to a question as to who within the Movement had reported that any one of the internees favoured a separate peace with Japan at any time, Blood refused to answer and Clyne disallowed the question, evidently on security grounds.

lead in Western Australia. It would also appear that F. J. Thomas, to whom this task was allotted, did more than investigate; Clyne, after recording the suggestion made in Court that the four persons in Perth were the "victims of the investigator", said that he was "prepared to believe that Thomas was not a passive investigator".

At the subsequent police court case Frederick James Thomas described himself in evidence as an investigator with the Special Branch of the C.I.B. attached to Military Intelligence. Under cross-examination he revealed that he had long been a rolling stone. He said that he had joined "the department" about a year before. About two years ago he had joined the Communist Party. Later in the cross-examination Thomas said that he had consulted Detective-Sergeant G. R. Richards during an adjournment and Richards had advised him to tell the truth, which was that he had joined the Communist Party on Richards's instructions, for the purpose of getting secret information for the police.

The four people arrested in Perth on 9th March—Laurence Frederick Bullock, Nancy Rachel Krakouer, Edward Cunningham Quicke and Charles Leonard Albert Williams—were arrested by a detective of the Criminal Investigation Branch under Regulation 79 of the National Security Regulations. On 31st March the War Cabinet decided that they should be prosecuted on an *ex officio* indictment before the High Court. Later, however, after considering advice by counsel, it was decided to lay an information in the police court and have the four people committed for trial. The charge against the four was that they had "conspired together to assist within the Commonwealth of Australia a public enemy, to wit, the armed forces of Japan contrary to Section 86 of the Crimes Act".

Clyne records the events subsequent to the arrests in Perth as follows:

> When Bullock and the others were arrested, a message was at once sent by the Military Command, Perth, to Eastern Command, setting out the above information and adding "P. R. Stephensen, your command named by Quicke as leader of Movement, your command. Suggest urgent action A.H.Q. and all other commands and districts have been informed."[5]

On the eve of the arrests in Sydney there had been a change in the security organisation. From 1941 onwards surveillance of possibly subversive organisations and individuals appears to have been a responsibility of four groups: the Investigation Branch of the Attorney-General's Department; officers of Military Intelligence; the policemen of the "Military Police Intelligence Section" working in close collaboration with the Military Intelligence officers; and military officers who formed State branches of a Security Service described by an Intelligence officer at the Clyne inquiry as a body set up under the Attorney-General but advisory to the Army. The last-mentioned officers appear to have communicated with the Director of Security, Colonel Longfield Lloyd,[6] in Canberra but at this stage their

[5] Report, p. 7.

[6] Lt-Col E. E. Longfield Lloyd, MC, VD. (1st AIF: 1 Bn.) Aust Govt Commissioner Japan 1935-40; Director, Commonwealth Security Service 1941-45, Director-General 1945-49; Director, Commonwealth Investigation Service 1944-52. B. Sydney, 13 Sep 1890. Died 18 Jul 1957.

communications, if any, concerning the Australia First Movement do not appear to have reached the permanent head of the Attorney-General's department.

On 8th March the Commissioner of Police in New South Wales, MacKay, was appointed Commonwealth Director-General of Security. That day MacKay informed the Chiefs of Staff that the "new Security Service" would be under the direction of the Attorney-General but during his absence—Evatt left Australia on 9th March—would function under the control of the Minister for the Army.

After a conference at Police Headquarters, Sydney, between New South Wales police officers and Military Intelligence officers in the early hours of the morning of 10th March, a list of names was made and, on the responsibility of the Chief Staff Officer in charge of Intelligence, Eastern Command, 16 persons were arrested, their premises searched and documents seized. This action was reported on 13th March to Army Headquarters, Melbourne, with a request that the execution of Ministerial warrants under Regulation 26 of the National Security (General) Regulations be treated as one of extreme urgency.

If one assumes that the investigation made in Western Australia by Thomas had been made in a detached way and without any continuing exchange of information or instructions between Perth and Sydney during the investigation, it would appear that the decision to make the arrests in Sydney was based solely on a statement by Quicke naming Stephensen as "leader of Movement", coupled with the dossiers that Military Intelligence had previously compiled and which hitherto they had found insufficient to justify the arrest of anyone. If Quicke's identification of Stephensen as "leader of Movement" meant only that he was leader of the Australia First Movement in Sydney that was a fact that had been publicly known since the foundation of the Movement and constituted no new evidence of any kind. If it was interpreted to mean that Stephensen was leader of the conspiracy in Perth, or that he was aware of it, then it is strange that neither then nor later was any evidence produced in support of that allegation. Clyne states: "Though there were, as I have said, grounds for suspecting some relation between the Western Australians and some members of the Movement in Sydney, the members of the Movement established in Sydney were completely unaware of the conspiracy alleged against the persons arrested in Western Australia."[7] In another place: "They had in their possession dossiers relating to the persons arrested, and though they had strong reasons for suspecting some relationship between the persons detained in Western Australia and some members of the Movement in Sydney, a little more investigation would have shown that some of the persons arrested had never heard of Bullock or any of his associates."

Why then were the Sydney people arrested after 9th March but not arrested in the week before 9th March? Their own activities or beliefs had not changed in that week and in fact the latest "activity" recorded was

[7] Report, p. 8.

Stephensen's concurrence in an official decision that another public meeting of the Movement should not be held. There was no evidence to connect them with Perth events. All that had changed was that a somewhat crazy plot by some obscure persons in another part of Australia had either produced in Military Intelligence a state of mind in which arrests which had previously not been thought necessary now became urgent, or it produced the public circumstances in which arrests which they would have liked to make but could not attempt could now be made successfully.

The recommendation for the detention of the 16 arrested persons was placed before the Minister for the Army and Ministerial warrants, dated 20th March 1942, were issued under Regulation 26. Subsequently another member of the Movement living in Melbourne was arrested on 7th May and detained under an order made on 30th April.

Before Clyne, Francis Bindon Blood, a solicitor who was an officer attached to Military Intelligence at Police Headquarters, Sydney, from 1940 to 1942, said that he was in charge of investigation into *The Publicist* and the Australia First Movement. In reply to the question why he agreed to the detention of the 16 people Blood said:

> The first principle of Security, as it was taught to us . . . was that, if an organisation was in existence and if there was evidence that it was subversive or inimical to the war effort, action should be taken to break up that organisation before it could actively carry through its intentions; and the most effective manner of breaking up an organisation is to take into custody the executive, the committee and those most closely and most actively associated with the organisation. . . . It was the principle discussed by me with Colonel Powell and Captain Newman between December 1941 and March 1942 in relation to "Australia First". . . . The telegram was the final matter.

In the Perth Police Court on 13th March Bullock, Krakouer, Quicke and Williams were committed for trial in the Criminal Court. The trial opened on 2nd June.

The case for the prosecution rested mainly on the evidence of Thomas. Thomas said that on instructions from the detective-sergeant in charge of the Special Bureau of the Criminal Investigation Branch, Perth, in February 1942 he began an inquiry into the Australia First Movement in Western Australia. He assumed the name Frederick Karl Hardt and gained the acquaintance of Krakouer and through her of Bullock, who said that he was the organiser of the Australia First Movement in Western Australia, and was an "out-and-out national socialist". Bullock's dwelling had been raided by the police, who had seized papers and books. He had been in touch with the German propaganda chief in North America, he said. Bullock introduced Thomas to Quicke and at a meeting attended by these three and Krakouer in an hotel room on 21st February an "Australia First Party" was formed with Bullock as leader and Krakouer as secretary. Bullock told the meeting that they would have to use sabotage to help the Japanese and delegated himself and Quicke to obtain gelignite and Thomas small arms. Bullock said that a proclamation must be drawn up to be broadcast when the Japanese occupied the country. Next day

Bullock introduced Williams to Thomas as an expert in the use of explosives and Williams described the measures necessary for blowing up the Ford Motor Works at Cottesloe, and discussed other plans for sabotage and assassination. At a meeting on 27th February the four people met and Bullock read the proclamation, which was discussed. Next day Bullock gave Thomas the typed proclamation. Thomas took it to the police who photographed it. Thomas then returned it to Bullock. The proclamation was addressed to the "Men and Women of Australia" and announced a new Government introducing a new system based on a negotiated peace with Japan; henceforth the destiny of Australia would be guided by the slogan of Australia First which was the name of the political organisation introducing the National Socialist system. Among other policies, it proclaimed the removal of Jews from all government positions or any place of authority and confiscation of their property and their internment. Persons opposed to the National Socialist system would be summarily shot. The Australian nation was ordered to lay down its arms.

The defence maintained that it was all a police frame-up. Thomas manufactured evidence to create an offence. Nearly all the matter in the proclamation was originated by Thomas. Bullock had typed it as a favour to Thomas, whom he and the others regarded as either a kind of madman or a police agent. A jury on 23rd June found Bullock and Williams guilty and Krakouer and Quicke not guilty, and made a recommendation for mercy in the case of Williams but did not state any grounds. Bullock was sentenced to three years imprisonment with hard labour and Williams to two years. The two men made an unsuccessful application to the Court of Criminal Appeal. Delivering judgment in that court Mr Justice Dwyer[8] said that there was ample evidence to convict all four; it was possible that the jury thought that Krakouer and Quicke were not "mentally responsible" for the conspiratorial agreement and did not understand it. The verdict of the Criminal Court was based on the evidence presented. The circumstances surrounding the events which were described in that evidence leave ground for considerable scepticism whether there ever was any substantial threat to security in the alleged conspiracy. Clyne comments: "It is difficult to imagine what moved these puny conspirators to such ambitious and dangerous designs." The persons detained in Sydney were firmly convinced and have publicly stated that the incident was a plot contrived at the instigation of Evatt to catch them.

On 14th April, more than a month after the detention of the sixteen in Sydney, Knowles sent a memorandum to Whitlam, concurring in Whitlam's view expressed on 16th February, that the speeches referred to did not contravene Regulation 42(1)(a) and asking him to consider whether any of the later matter in the file appeared to indicate a contravention of the law. Whitlam replied on the 16th:

I have perused the police report and notes of the speech by P. R. Stephensen of 19th February and the later communications, circulars and notices contained in the

[8] Hon Sir John Dwyer, KCMG. Justice, Supreme Court of WA 1929-46, Chief Justice 1946-59. B. 1880. Died 25 Aug 1966.

file. In my opinion, there is nothing in any of that matter which appears to indicate any contravention by Stephensen of any regulation made under the National Security Act or of any other Commonwealth law.

On 21st May the Solicitor-General informed the Minister for the Army that 12 of the 16 internees had asked for leave to object to an "Advisory Committee" against their internment. One of the 12, Stephensen, had since withdrawn his application in view of the fact that the Prime Minister had stated in Parliament that he was to be publicly charged in accordance with the ordinary processes of the law. Of the other 11, eight intended to proceed with their applications and one of the four who had not "given notice" of intention to apply had "intimated" that he intended to apply. The remaining six, their counsel stated, when called before the committee would say that they did not intend to go on with any application for leave to appeal as they did not recognise the jurisdiction of the Advisory Committee. There was so much typing to be done—3,000 pages—that the Military Police Intelligence Branch would not have it ready for another week.

Knowles considered that the Prime Minister's statement to which Stephensen referred was one that included the words: "The whole processes of the law will be invoked; the civil authority will be directed to formulate charges on the evidence that is available. I agree . . . that there ought to be no prejudicing of the fair trial of these people, and that they ought to be given every opportunity to establish their innocence, if they are innocent."[9]

The next paper on the file is an undated and unsigned and unaddressed minute pinned to a cutting from Hansard of 28th May with the words in italics underlined: Mr Beasley, replying to Mr Calwell, "The position of other persons who may be involved with the Australia First Movement *is a matter that comes within the province not of myself, but of Army Intelligence. In those circumstances I am not able to express an opinion upon the matter.*" The minute continued:

> On 27th March 1942, the Prime Minister stated in the House:
>
> "The Australia First Movement has been under the constant observation of Military Intelligence for several months. The previous Government had it under observation. As the result of that observation, twenty persons concerning whom a *prima facie* case *has been established by* Military Intelligence have been interned. I do not know if any more persons will be arrested. The whole processes of the law will be invoked; *the civil authority will be directed to formulate charges on the evidence that is available.* I agree with the Honourable Member for Bourke (Mr Blackburn) that there ought to be no prejudicing of the fair trial of these people and that they ought to be given every opportunity to establish their innocence."
>
> The only persons against whom a *prima facie* case for prosecution could be made out were the four Western Australians who have now been committed for trial.
>
> It may be embarrassing for the Minister for the Army to make the Statement proposed by this Department in view of the Statement made by the Attorney-General (Dr Evatt) in connexion with the Ratliff and Thomas case (see S.M.H. 17.7.41).

[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 521.

"Labour will not tolerate any attempt to imperil the security of this country. But we think that where Australian citizens are alleged to be guilty they should be prosecuted in the ordinary course and charged with some specific offence. . . . The men are detained on the fiat of the Minister. They are not charged with any offence. They are not entitled to an open trial. They have no right to confront witnesses called against them. The so-called Appeal Tribunals have the right to hear witnesses behind their backs. In all these respects, the ordinary course of justice is completely forgotten."

Ratliff and Thomas were ultimately released on giving the following undertaking:

"I believe that it is the duty of all Australian citizens to work for national unity and a maximum war effort to secure victory over Nazism and Fascism as early as possible.

I undertake to assist in the development of this duty and I will refrain from all acts which might impede the war effort in any way and I will do all in my power as an individual to ensure the speedy conclusion of the war with victory for the British Commonwealth of Nations and her Allies."

Incidentally there are 167 Australians in internment camps and if Stephensen & Co. are released without going before an Advisory Committee, an awkward precedent will be created.

The Prime Minister states that the people should be given every opportunity to establish their innocence and the Attorney-General stated that people detained should be prosecuted in the ordinary course and charged with a specific offence.

This is apparently not possible in the present case and the question arises as to whether, in view of the Attorney-General's unqualified statement in the Ratliff and Thomas case, the same considerations should apply in this case.

I suggest that the Minister for the Army should not make any statement until the Attorney-General is consulted by cablegram.

On 27th May the following printed leaflet was issued:

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Memorandum to subscribers of "THE PUBLICIST"

Subscribers to "The Publicist" are hereby notified that this monthly newspaper, which is registered under the Newspapers Act, has temporarily suspended publication since 1st March 1942. Its three proprietors, including the Editor, were interned on 10th March 1942, by order of the Minister for the Army. They were interned in company with thirteen other Australian-born men, all residents of New South Wales, among whom are several writers who have regularly or occasionally contributed articles to "The Publicist". In these circumstances normal monthly publication could not be maintained. Arrangements will be made in due course, either to resume publication, or to refund unused subscriptions.

Since it was established in July 1936, "The Publicist" has strictly conformed with requirements of the law. All its contents since May 1940 have been submitted to, and passed by, the Official Censor appointed by the Commonwealth Government. No charge has been preferred against its proprietors, or against any of the sixteen men interned in New South Wales. None of these sixteen men has had any association with four persons in Western Australia who have been charged with conspiracy to assist the enemy. These four accused persons were not at any time members of, or connected in any way with the organisation, established in Sydney in October 1941, which was named "The Australia First Movement".

Relying on justice, and seeking release and exoneration, the proprietors of "The Publicist" request you to communicate immediately, by telegram, letter, and personal interview with Ministers of the Crown, Members of Parliament, and editors of newspapers, to call for a full inquiry into the internment of these sixteen men in New South Wales; to press for their release and exoneration; and to ask for a lifting of

the censorship instruction which has prevented their side of the case from being stated in newspapers.

Interned now for almost three months without trial, despite allegations of the most serious nature which were made against them in Parliament on 26th March, these sixteen men of "The Publicist" and of "The Australia First Movement" in New South Wales declare that they are entirely innocent of any conspiracy or illegal activity whatsoever. They rely now on an awakened public opinion to protect their rights as Australian-born citizens to a fair and speedy trial, or to release and exculpation by proper processes of law.

Issued by
"AUSTRALIA FIRST MOVEMENT", Room 45, Fourth Floor,
26 O'Connell Street, Sydney.
27th May 1942.

A copy of this leaflet was sent to Mr B. H. Corser, M.P., by Stephensen's father at whose request Corser sent it on to the Prime Minister.

In the Communist paper *Tribune* of 29th April the names of 15 of the internees were published. Most of the names were mis-spelt, which seems to indicate that they had been conveyed to the *Tribune* orally.

Of the 16 detained in Sydney three—Keith Percival Bath, John Thomas Kirtley and Harley Matthews—were not members of the Movement.

As mentioned, eight men appealed against internment and their appeals were heard before an "Advisory Committee" or a "Special Committee". Five of these—Bath, Clarence Crowley, Cecil Walter Salier, Walter Frederick Tinker-Giles and Martin Francis Watts—were released in August 1942. Edward Cory de la Roche Masey and Gordon Thomas Rice were released in October 1942 and Alexander Rud Mills (who had been detained in Melbourne) was released in December 1942. Five men appealed and then withdrew their appeals, generally on the ground that they did not wish to be tried by a secret tribunal. Four of these—Valentine Crowley, Clive Kirkwood Downe, Sydney Benjamin Hooper and Eric Dudley Stephensen (brother of P. R. Stephensen)—were released on the recommendation of committees in September 1942 and one, Leslie Kevin Cahill, in February 1944.

Four did not appeal. Of these Edmund John Arnold was released in September 1942, briefly re-interned and released again in October; Matthews was released in September; John Thomas Kirtley was released in February 1944; Percy Reginald Stephensen was still in internment in May 1945 when the Clyne inquiry was completed. He was released in September 1945, the month in which Clyne completed his report.

Of the four who were tried in Perth, Nancy Rachel Krakouer was released at the end of 1944, but the others were still in internment when the inquiry ended.

It appears that all who were released were subject to restrictions at least for a time.

We shall now examine the question whether the safeguards introduced to protect the rights of the individual during the term of the previous Government were observed. One of these safeguards was a requirement by War Cabinet in the Menzies Government that the Minister for the

Army before issuing an order for the detention of a person must be satisfied that the person concerned had been engaged in subversive activities or was otherwise engaged in activities contrary to the interests of national security. Mere membership of a subversive association or the profession of a political doctrine were not in themselves considered as sufficient evidence. This rule laid down by the Menzies War Cabinet does not appear to have been applied in this case. Some of the orders for detention, if not all, seem to have relied solely on the allegation that the arrested person had been associated with the Australia First Movement and not on any evidence concerning subversive activities by the person himself.

At this point, with due respect to the learned judge, the historian questions the rightness of the line of argument which led Mr Justice Clyne to the answer he gave to the first question submitted to him: whether the detention of these persons as recommended by the Army authorities was justified. He says: "In view of this recommendation by the Army for Ministerial warrants under Regulation 26, I can see no sufficient reason which would justify the Minister in not accepting the recommendation."

This appears to shift the whole balance from the point on which it had been placed by careful calculation earlier in the war in order to ensure the highest possible protection of the rights of the individual consonant with the protection of the security of the nation. Regulation 26 gave power to the Minister to order the detention of a person if the Minister were "satisfied" that it was necessary to do so "to prevent that person acting in any manner prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the Commonwealth". The learned judge seems to suggest that the onus is on the Minister to find reasons for rejecting a recommendation. When a power is so clearly confided to a Minister, without any right of delegation, the more usual political and parliamentary interpretation of the situation would be that the intention is to make sure that the power is not used lightly or in a routine way but that independent judgment is exercised by a Minister who can be immediately made answerable to his own Cabinet and to Parliament for what he does. A conscientious Minister would ask those making the recommendation to produce a convincing case for approving the recommendation and would not himself approve it simply because he had found no reasons to reject it. The previous Government had clearly taken this view for the War Cabinet had given guidance to the Minister on the matters on which he must satisfy himself before he approved a recommendation for detention.

There is nothing to indicate in the case under discussion whether or not the Minister for the Army did in fact examine the evidence and satisfy himself that the recommendation was well founded. The departure from previous practice, however, was that his acceptance of the recommendation, however reached, certainly did not satisfy the requirements established in 1940 and confirmed in 1941 that the person detained must himself have been engaged in subversive activities or in activities con-

trary to the interests of national security. In the case of the two Communists, Ratliff and Thomas, which arose in March 1941, it was declared by the Minister for the Army of the day that "membership of a subversive association is not, in itself, a reason for internment" and that reason was not invoked against them, although they were in fact members of the Communist Party which had been declared an illegal organisation in June 1940. In the case of the Australia First Movement, which arose almost exactly 12 months later in March 1942, little could be alleged against some of the persons except that they had been associated either with the Movement or personally with its president and the Movement was a lawful organisation. This allegation was apparently accepted by the Minister as sufficient ground for approving a recommendation for detention.

Taking the view he did on Ministerial responsibility, Mr Justice Clyne found that the Army authorities were not justified in recommending the detention of eight persons. A study of his report reveals that, independently of any consideration of the earlier events recounted above, he had reached his own opinion that "mere membership of the Australia First Movement was not in itself sufficient to warrant a person's detention". It was mainly because of that opinion that he found that the detention of some persons was not justified. Presumably the detention of the others was held to be justified because of their activities. An examination of the report reveals that in 1942, and indeed as late as 1945 when the report was made, the measure of conduct "prejudicial to Australia's war effort" was much more narrow than it had been, in different circumstances, a year earlier. The "activities" of Stephensen, against whom the blackest case was alleged, seem to have been the holding of certain opinions concerning which some of the evidence belonged to a pre-war period, and the preparation of the manifesto of January 1942.

Examining the making of the orders for detention by the Minister for the Army, the fact emerges that the safeguards worked out in 1940 for the exercise of Ministerial power had disappeared.

A second safeguard lay in the right of appeal inserted into the regulations by various amendments made in 1940 and 1941. Mr Justice Clyne found on inquiry that all the persons who were detained were given a proper opportunity of appealing against the detention and there was no evidence that their cases were not fairly and justly considered. Some of the detained persons did not in fact appeal. Among the reasons subsequently advanced by them for not appealing was an objection to being "tried" by a "secret tribunal". This objection inevitably prompts the memory that in the public agitation against the internment of Ratliff and Thomas it had been argued by some of the Labour Opposition that Australian citizens should not be detained and then obliged to appeal but should be charged with a specific offence and given an open trial. In September 1942 Evatt, who had claimed open trial for Ratliff and Thomas in 1941, was advancing Ministerial reasons why it was not possible for the Australia First people to have an open trial.

Some protests reached the Attorney-General's Department. For example, on the 25th the South Yarra Branch of the Australian Labour Party sent to the Acting Attorney-General a resolution that members of the Movement "be given a public trial according to the laws of the land"; and that day the Christian Socialist Movement, Ashbury, New South Wales, asked the Attorney-General that the same rights be accorded the imprisoned members of the Australia First Movement as the Christian Socialist Movement had requested for Ratliff and Thomas. On 28th April the Constitutional Association of New South Wales urged the Prime Minister that "at the earliest moment your own declared intention should be carried into effect by bringing the accused persons to trial so that they may then have the opportunity of making an answer to the charges". This letter was signed by the president of the Association, Dr Frank Louat.[1]

The detentions also became the subject of parliamentary debate. Forde, as Minister for the Army, had announced the arrests on 26th March 1942:

> Documents and papers which have been seized purport to show that certain people in Australia intended to make contact with the Japanese army at the moment of an invasion of Australia. The documents set out elaborate plans for sabotage at vulnerable points in this country, and describe methods calculated to make resistance to the Japanese impossible. Plans for the assassination of prominent people are set out. One document purports to be a proclamation with the heading "Australia First Government", and "welcomes to this country as friends and liberators the Japanese leaders and army". These documents indicate a fifth column activity of the worst kind by a very small band of people.[2]

Next morning, immediately after question-time, the Leader of the Opposition, Fadden, moved an adjournment in order to discuss "the disclosure . . . of a treasonable plot". The Minister's statement, he said, "came as a severe shock to this Parliament and to the whole of Australia . . . charges of an intention to establish in Australia a Quisling government to cooperate with and give assistance to the King's enemies, to sabotage vital defence works, and to assassinate certain unnamed individuals are without parallel in Australian history and in British history, at any rate since the Guy Fawkes plot. Arrests of this description must be followed by trial for treason."[3] The subsequent debate revealed the alarm with which the speakers viewed the alleged conspiracy; there were demands for an examination of the general security measures throughout the country; there must be firmer measures to deal with aliens.

Mr Blackburn made a characteristic plea: "If they are alleged to be guilty of treasonable practices . . . they should not be detained in gaol without an early trial. Either they should be liberated speedily or speedily prosecuted";[4] to which the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, added:

> The first obligation on the Government was . . . to take the elementary precaution of removing them from any possibility of carrying on their activities until such

[1] Dr F. R. Louat, QC. Lecturer and radio commentator 1938-47; President, Constitutional Association 1940-46. Barrister-at-law; of Sydney; b. Guildford, NSW, 30 Dec 1901. Died 27 Jan 1963.

[2] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 462.

[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 516.

[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 517-18.

time as the evidence was examined. . . . I agree with the honorable member for Bourke (Mr Blackburn) that there ought to be no prejudicing of the fair trial of these people, and that they ought to be given every opportunity to establish their innocence, if they are innocent.[5]

Mr Brennan was equally forthright:

I entirely concur with the view expressed by the honorable member for Bourke . . . that these persons against whom these clearly diabolical practices are alleged should, if evidence exists to support the charges made against them, be put upon their trial. I decline absolutely to accept an *ex parte* statement in regard to their guilt, even from such an unimpeachable authority as the Minister for the Army (Mr Forde).[6]

In May Mr Rosevear asked the Minister for the Army the reason for the delay in formulating charges, and he was joined by Mr Francis[7] of the Opposition and Mr Calwell of his own party; in addition Mr Archie Cameron, an Opposition member, wanted to know why, while those in Western Australia were prosecuted before an open court, those in New South Wales were to have their cases heard "by an internees tribunal the membership of which is not generally known, and evidence before which is not given in public?"[8]

Calwell returned to the matter in September and was supported by Brennan.[9] Opposition members joined the debate. Earlier discussion of the detentions had implied that the Government was at fault in not summarily dealing with possible conspirators; now, with the improving state of the war, the earlier panic tended to disappear, and the complaint was rather that the Government was at fault in prolonging the internment of possibly innocent people. The Minister for the Army had, it was said, "expressed in extravagant language views about members of the Australia First Movement who had been interned". If the matter was as serious as he had indicated, then the matter should have been dealt with forthwith; if not, then the internment of those concerned should be closely examined; either way the need for a speedy trial of those concerned was imperative.

Evatt, with whose department responsibility for internees' tribunals now rested, made a statement on 10th September 1942 on the Security Service generally, as well as the detentions associated with the Australia First Movement.[1] He gave a definition of "accepted policy in relation to restrictions upon liberty of movement" and reasons why it was difficult to apply "these general principles to the infinite variety of circumstances":

. . . there cannot be any absolute right of public trial in these cases of restriction of liberty. In most cases it would not be possible to prove that the accused person had committed a specific offence. Guilt of a specific offence is not the test to be applied. The test to be applied is whether the restriction is reasonably necessary

[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, pp. 520-1.
[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 170, p. 523.
[7] Hon Sir Josiah Francis. MHR 1922-55; Minister for the Army 1949-55 and Minister for the Navy 1949-51 and 1954-55; Aust Minister and Consul-General in New York 1955-61. B. Ipswich, Qld, 28 Mar 1890. Died 22 Feb 1964.
[8] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 171, pp. 1395-7.
[9] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, pp. 43-60.
[1] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 172, pp. 152-7.

to prevent the possibility of serious injury to the war effort. Again it is prevention, not punishment, which is the objective.[2]

Of the sixteen interned in New South Wales seven had, by September, been before an advisory committee and for five "internment was commuted to restriction". The remaining nine, who "demanded a public trial and either did not appeal at all to the committee, or else withdrew their appeals before their completion" were the subject of a full investigation. "The Director-General of Security, the Deputy Director of Security for New South Wales, the officer in charge of Military Intelligence in New South Wales, an Assistant Director of Security at Canberra, and the Principal of Security Service, who deals with internments, were consulted." In four cases full internment was to continue, and for the other five it was decided "to commute the internment to an order imposing restrictions with varying degrees of severity".

Those joining in the recommendations were impressed by the fact that many were probably unaware of the objects of the inmost group, and by other special factors such as age. In one case, however, the case against the internee was very flimsy indeed.

There the matter rested until January 1943 when Calwell, in an adjournment debate, alleged that "those unfortunate persons who were arrested and interned as members of the Australia First Movement about twelve months ago and who were subsequently released, have been refused their legitimate claims for legal expenses which they incurred in an attempt to clear their characters". Brennan interjected to add that "worse than legal expenses is the fact that some of them waited six months for trial".[3] In March Blackburn pleaded that the time had come to remove restraints on those released, and that favourable consideration should be given to those interned.[4]

In March 1944 Mr Menzies spoke at length on the New South Wales internments. He emphasised the point that there was no evidence that the Australia First Movement members in New South Wales were parties to the plans of the conspirators in Western Australia, and cited the statement of the Attorney-General, in September 1942, to that effect. Quoting the circumstances of some of the arrests he pleaded that there should be a tribunal to investigate "whether there were ever real reasons for their internment".[5]

The subsequent inquiry by Mr Justice Clyne began on 19th June 1944 and his report was presented to Parliament on 12th September 1945, the debate on it taking place from 13th to 15th March 1946.[6]

At the inquiry Mr Dovey, K.C., appeared to assist the Commissioner, Mr Shand, K.C., appeared for the Department of the Army and Security Services, Mr Cassidy, K.C., appeared for four of the internees and the

[2] Compare this statement with Vol I, Appendix 7, p. 610.
[3] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 173, p. 155.
[4] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 174, p. 1302.
[5] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 178, p. 2456.
[6] *Commonwealth Debates*, Vol 186, pp. 226-36.

widow of a fifth, eleven others were represented by counsel or attorneys, and one plus the three men arrested in Perth appeared in person. Evidence was taken from military and police officers and from the internees. The transcript of the proceedings occupies 2,514 pages.

Mr Justice Clyne signed his report on 5th September 1945. He had been appointed to inquire into and report on six questions. The questions and the Commissioner's answers were:

(1) Whether the detention in March, April and May, 1942, under Regulation 26 of the National Security (General) Regulations of certain persons connected with the "Australia First Movement" group as recommended by the Army authorities was justified:[7] This question in the form in which it is expressed leaves some doubt as to its proper construction, but I think it can be answered in one sense correctly by saying that the detention of these persons was justified as it was in fact recommended by the Army authorities. In view of this recommendation by the Army for Ministerial warrants under Regulation 26, I can see no sufficient reason which would justify the Minister in not accepting the recommendation. But as I am entitled to report upon all matters arising out of this Inquiry which in my opinion should be dealt with or reported upon by me I think it proper to add that the Army authorities were not justified in recommending the detention of the following persons, namely:

Keith Percival Bath
Clarence Crowley
Sydney Benjamin Hooper
Edward Cory de la Roche Masey
Harley Matthews
Cecil Walter Salier
Walter Frederick Tinker-Giles
Martin Francis Watts

(2) Whether the said persons were given a proper opportunity of appealing against their detention to the appropriate appeal tribunal and whether those who did appeal had their cases fairly and justly considered: All the persons who were detained were given a proper opportunity of appealing against their detention in accordance with the National Security (General) Regulations, and I should add that not only were they given a proper opportunity to appeal, but special committees were formed to reconsider the cases of some of the persons detained. Though complaints were made by some of the persons detained about the methods adopted by the tribunal which heard their appeals, there is no evidence that their cases were not fairly and justly considered.

(3) Whether the continuance of the original detention was justified and whether the restrictions imposed upon any of the said persons after release were just and reasonable in the circumstances: I have already stated that, in my opinion, the persons whose names I have mentioned ought not to have been detained, and accordingly the continuance of their detention was not justified. But the continuance of the detention until they were ultimately released of the persons rightly detained was justified, and the restrictions imposed on those persons who were released subject thereto were in the circumstances just and reasonable.

[7] There is ground for serious criticism of the terms drawn for the inquiry. The use of the word "justified", as the Commissioner indicated rather gently, is uncertain in its meaning. The finding of the Commissioner gave the word a narrow meaning, namely that what was done was justified in law inasmuch as the recommendation for detention was legally made and legally approved. Unfortunately in public discussion he was reputed to have found the action to have been justified in the far wider and popular sense of the term.

(4) Whether it is proper that any further action should be taken in respect of any of the said persons: In my opinion there are no reasons for any further action in respect of any of the said persons.

(5) Whether in the case of any of the said persons, it is proper that they should receive any compensation from the Commonwealth and, if so, what amount: The persons who, in my opinion, ought not to have been detained and therefore should be granted compensation are the following:

Keith Percival Bath
Clarence Crowley
Sydney Benjamin Hooper
Edward Cory de la Roche Masey
Harley Matthews
Cecil Walter Salier
Walter Frederick Tinker-Giles

As, in my opinion, the arrest of these persons was justified, but their subsequent detention was not, they are not entitled to compensation as a matter of law.

He said that he thought the persons wrongly detained were entitled to a public declaration that they were in fact wrongly detained and were not disloyal and should receive the following compensation:

Keith Percival Bath	£500.
Clarence Crowley	£500.
Sydney Benjamin Hooper	Payment of the costs incurred by him in his appeal to the Advisory Committee and in connexion with this Inquiry and of the medical expenses incurred by him in consequence of his detention.
Edward Cory de la Roche Masey	£350.
Harley Matthews	£700.
Cecil Walter Salier	£500.
Walter Frederick Tinker-Giles	Payment of the costs incurred by him in his appeal to the Advisory Committee and in connexion with this Inquiry.

He recommended also that the widow of Watts, who had died of illness in July 1944, should be granted £400.

The recommendations of the Commissioner for compensation and his findings that the detention of some of the persons was not warranted led to considerable correspondence and the lodging of further claims for compensation from persons who considered they had been wronged. The investigation of these legal claims, some of which are still[8] in dispute, is beyond the scope of a history of Australia at war. What is the summing up on the matters that are our immediate concern?

The Australia First Movement certainly did not represent any organised subversion or any organised action prejudicial to the Australian war effort. Assuming that it was "Fascist" in outlook it certainly could not be compared with the Communist Party as a purposeful and well-organised instrument for advancing its own policies.

The "conspiracy" in Perth seems to have been a crazy piece of plotting by persons of no consequence who would certainly have had no capacity

[8] This manuscript was written in 1951 and the final revision made in 1964.

to put their plot into effect and had no contact with the enemy and there is a strong suspicion that they were encouraged in developing their crazy ideas by the person chosen to "investigate" them. The Australia First Movement, as a movement, was not concerned in this conspiracy.

In the Movement there were some persons who expressed publicly opinions that might have been harmful to the Australian war effort if their opinions had any influence on listeners. Perhaps the matter of greater concern than whether their opinions had any influence was whether, being Fascist and anti-Communist, they may not have attracted counter-demonstrations either from ordinary Australians or from Communists and provoked public disorder.

The detention of some of the 21 persons concerned was undoubtedly the grossest infringement of individual liberty made during the war and the tardiness in rectifying it was a matter of shame to the democratic institution and to the authorities concerned.

The incident, occurring at the time of greatest danger to Australia and during the fear of invasion, was a reflection of the state of mind of officialdom and the preoccupation of the people with matters other than civil liberty. Perhaps in the uncertainties of the day extreme action might have been excusable, or the argument that it is better to make a mistake than to do nothing. Every war has its casualties and even if some casualties may have been avoided they have to be accepted. That is the only line of argument that could possibly excuse the action taken. In retrospect, the most charitable view is that, under the strain of wartime anxiety, the Curtin Government had not fully appreciated the nature of the actions taken in its name. Without that assumption the judgment would be harsh indeed.

A serious aspect of the case was the weakness of public or general political concern about the possible infringement of civil rights or the inflicting of a wrong on the individual and the silence of many of those who had made a public profession of being the watchdogs of civil liberty.

APPENDIX 6

A NOTE ON SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE BOMBING OF DARWIN

THE principal public source of information on the attack made by Japanese aircraft at Darwin on 19th February 1942 is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper No. 40 (Group D) of 1945, presented by command, 5th October 1945, and containing the two reports of the Commission of Inquiry (the Lowe Commission) which were presented to the Minister for Defence Coordination on 27th March and 9th April 1942, respectively, and the observations on those reports which were made by the Departments of the Navy, Army, Air and Interior. A further responsible account is given in C. L. A. Abbott, *Australia's Frontier Province* (1950), in Chapters XI and XII. *Darwin Drama*, by Owen Griffiths, is a clear first-hand narrative by a naval officer relating to the defence of Darwin and is the best story of the events in the harbour during the raid. An eyewitness account, written some time after the event, appeared on the anniversary of the raid (19th February 1943) in the *Argus*, Melbourne, under the signature of Axel Olsen and was possibly the first authentic story published. Immediately after the raid, Australian metropolitan newspapers contained various news items based on interviews with so-called survivors but most of them are of value only as pieces of detached personal experience. E. Bennett-Bremner, *Front-line Airline* (1944), Chapter VIII, describes events as experienced by the staff of Qantas Empire Airways. Chapter X gives one of the best published accounts of the Japanese raid on Broome on 3rd March.

Besides these published accounts there is a great deal of unpublished material in the files of the Departments of the Navy, Army, Air, Home Security and Interior. The transcript of evidence taken by the Lowe Commission is still regarded as a private document, in view of the assurances given by the Commissioner to some of the witnesses, and lies in the Department of Defence. The Official War Historian has recorded in his diary notes of interviews with army officers who were on duty in Darwin on the day of the raid.

An examination of these materials suggests that Mr Justice Lowe's reports, being based on the evidence placed before him, were less than fair to the Civil Administration and were rather generous to those unofficial leaders of the Darwin community who were foremost in the rush from the town. The core of the matter is probably contained in the following passage of his report: "The evidence also disclosed the existence in some sections of the population of a lack of confidence in and resentment towards the Administrator. It so happened that most of the witnesses who gave evidence before me on this matter were of this section, and I feel that it is dangerous to draw an inference on partial evidence against the Administrator when an examination of all the relevant evidence which

may well cover a lengthy period might lead to a different conclusion." The 70 witnesses who were examined by the Commissioner in six days at Darwin were preponderantly those critical of the local administration and included some who had need to excuse their own actions on the fatal day.

The excusing of the leaders of the North Australian Workers' Union because, in joining the rush, they only did what others did through lack of "leadership", overlooks the fact that these men had customarily claimed and in practice exercised a control over a large section of the local populace much greater than anyone else, and they might reasonably have been expected to give leadership in a crisis. The fact that they left the town undoubtedly influenced others to leave.

APPENDIX 7

CENSORSHIP REPORTS AS A GUIDE TO PUBLIC OPINION

A ROUGH guide to the state of opinion in Australia during 1942 may be found in the Australian Censorship Report (Internal) and the Australian Military Censorship Summary—two mimeographed secret publications which were given a strictly limited circulation in higher governmental circles. They were prepared by the Post and Telegraph Censorship, which, among various other duties, was required to report on public opinion and morale. A supplementary source of the same kind of information is found in service Intelligence summaries.

These periodical reports are of doubtful value as evidence of the extent to which any opinion was held or to which any doubts and fears had spread, for censors and Intelligence officers were, from the nature of their work, on the look-out for the exceptional rather than the normal. Furthermore, it is a fair guess that persons who filled their letters with rumours, complaints and criticisms in wartime were a less careful and perhaps a less responsible class of people than those who did not do so. Nevertheless, these reports, which were based on the routine examination of thousands of letters, do show clearly significant changes in mood and opinion and they do indicate what topics were causing public concern at various times. In examining them, however, it should be remembered that they present, as it was the duty of their compilers to present, the worst that could be found.

Early in 1941 the censorship of letters revealed little comment or worry about the war. Morale was reported to be "excellent", a term which might be translated more exactly to mean that letter-writers were not grumbling, but whether from contentment or indifference is not clear. Occasionally there was an expression of pacifism or an occasional word of admiration of the way Britain could "take it". There was some criticism of Australian political squabbling and many references to strikes and industrial disturbances. In mid-March the Censor reported: "Letters, many of which are written by English people in Australia, frequently contain criticism of Australia's war effort."

After the defeat in Greece and Crete there was, during May and June, "an increasing volume of adverse comment and criticism" and the Censor observed that "much of the comment is to the effect that the politicians are responsible for these continued defeats". In the second half of the year signs of discontent among troops and stories of lack of discipline, idleness in camps and hints at "rackets" were seen. Letters written by visitors to Australia still spoke of the "complete indifference" of the Australians to the war but, on the other hand, occasional letters written by Australians on alleged mismanagement, bungling and delays betokened a critical interest on the part of some Australians. Yet the voicing of

bitterness against aliens who were alleged to have taken the jobs of servicemen or who were acquiring property was a more common feature in correspondence than concern about how the war was going and there was still a steady number of letter-writing pacifists. Towards the end of the year soldiers' complaints, particularly complaints of idleness in the Northern Territory and disappointment at not being sent overseas, became more common.

The first month of the war against Japan revealed an increase in general criticism and the frequent repetition of stories about misbehaviour of troops, bad administration, the evasion of military duty and so on. It would appear from the scolding tone that nerves were on edge. Throughout January 1942 this tendency grew. Censors reported "dangerous and idle gossip", criticism of lack of equipment in the Army, stories of bad discipline in camps, criticism of training, stories of evasion of controls, rackets and profiteering, more stories that other people are evading military service, fear of fifth columns, fear of defeat, criticism of Parliament and politicians and the administration in general and further criticism of aliens. The Malayan situation became more and more the centre of criticism and letter writers turned to condemnation of Churchill.

At the end of January the Censor reported: "Since the entry of Japan into the war innumerable letters from Australia contain criticism of British leaders and their policy." Examples quoted in the summaries show complaints that Churchill is only an orator or an old fogey, that England has neglected Australia, that England has sent Australians overseas to fight and is now telling Australia to wait until Germany is beaten, that there are plenty of troops idle in England, that Britain was responsible for all the bungling in Malaya, which was run by "incompetent social fools" or wearers of the "old school tie", that the British had not fought in the war but had left it to the Australians and the Indians.

A fortnight later, on 16th February, the Censor reported: "An outstanding feature of letters written in recent weeks is a growing volume of criticism of those in high places, who are held responsible for the reverses in the Pacific. Much of this comment is extremely bitter, and its intensity is increasing with the closer approach of the war to Australian shores. The letters are written by all classes of the community."

The confusion of mood of the populace is well illustrated by the diversity of the complaints. Letter writers all blame someone else but they all blame different people. Some attack Churchill and say that "Britain has let us down". On the other hand, others deplore that "we have no Churchills here". Curtin is criticised. He is also praised for "being the first man to prick the Churchill bubble" and it would appear that there was a great deal of support for his strongly "pro-Australian" line. Servicemen returning to Australia from overseas were very critical of their own people, even expressing disgust at the behaviour of Australians on the home front, but, even on this topic, while some talked of the "complacency" of the Australians others said the people in Sydney were "frightened stiff".

Quite a number of civilian letters, by their own contents, do reflect panic and an expectation of defeat among Australians. As in other periods of tension, there was a tendency for the particular criticisms to increase. Stories of strikes, drunkenness, betting, waste, rackets in obtaining exemptions from military service, loafing and so on were all exaggerated and the "politicians" condemned. On the one hand a factory manager complained that his men were resigning to take temporary jobs in order that they might enlist without being held back in a reserved occupation. On the other hand the Censor reported: "A lot of letters are still being written about the methods used to dodge the call-up for the Army."

On 9th March the Censor reported: "Criticism of the Federal Government is voluminous." The examples given show that the criticism concerned such diverse topics as the failure to introduce conscription, strikes, party wrangling, officials giving publicity to themselves, too many race-meetings, allegations that the Government was trying to bring about nationalisation without a mandate, disgust at the "squealing" by Ministers, a general dislike of "politicians", too much drinking, failure to deal with shirkers. Another common feature of the criticism was popular objection to the type of news broadcasts being given by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. There was also a good deal of distrust of the press and radio in general.

The Australian Military Censorship Summary of 2nd March, based on outgoing letters to troops, contained a considered statement under the heading "Criticism of British Government and Policy", as follows:

> The volume of criticism of the type reported under this heading in the last two summaries does not tend to decrease, but on the contrary Censors throughout Australia report an increased number of letters containing such comment. Fresh material for critics has been provided by the surrender of Singapore, the escape of the German warships from Brest, and the continued advances made by the Japanese Forces in the Dutch East Indies and Burma. . . . All these subjects are discussed and used by all classes of Australian people in their letters to troops, friends and relations abroad, and it is very evident that there is developing a grave loss of confidence in Great Britain's leaders, accompanied by a turning towards America.
>
> Another feature of this type of correspondence is the increasing number of those who say that Russia provides the only bright spot and that her methods should be copied by the Allies. "It's a pity they can't learn a few things from the Russians" is a phrase common to several letters recently.
>
> Whilst applauding the success of Britain's armies in recent weeks, several writers express the utmost distrust of her intentions.
>
> An opinion which is being expressed by an increasing number of letter writers is that the public are not being told the facts about the progress of the war, and this is responsible for a loss of faith in both the ability and the integrity of the Empire's leaders, who are frequently accused of being merely self-seekers who are turning the circumstances in which they find themselves to their own profit. . . .
>
> It is extremely difficult for a Censor to assess the condition of morale prevailing in the community, for letter writers are more prone to criticise than to praise. When reverses are met, the more vociferous is their criticism and complaint and they lash out at all and sundry. During the last few weeks the target for their attack has been Mr Churchill and with him his Ministry of the "old school-tie brigade", these being saddled with the reverses met with in the Pacific War, and being charged with

complacency at the time of events in that theatre. The result of all this is to make many of the Australian people angry, and to create a feeling of disappointment at the apparent lack of sympathy, as well as help, from Britain. A few have stated in their letters that the Japanese appear to be invincible and ask: "What is the use of opposing them?" These defeatists, however, appear to be exceptional. Numerous women hint at fears of personal violence at Japanese hands, and, in the northern parts of Australia, have, with their children, been hastening evacuation from coastal areas to the interior.

In another report of 16th March, stating that the criticism continued, the Censor added a further observation that some correspondents "state that the whole democratic system is wrong, and with this they couple the accusation that the war will continue just as long as the 'capitalists' will permit it". The next report, dated 30th March, said: "A cynical attitude towards the sincerity of effort behind the Allies' war plans and operations is frequently encountered in recent letters of the public". The same report spoke of bewilderment, bitterness and indignation.

In the first half of April, however, an improvement of temper was seen. While many "defeatist and jittery letters" were still seen those of a more resolute type were becoming more numerous. The change would appear to have been associated with increasing American aid and, in particular, with the arrival in Australia of General MacArthur, whose appointment, the Censor found, had met with "unanimous approval". In a report on public morale on 27th April the Censor said that MacArthur and the Americans had made the "outlook brighter".

There would appear to be little doubt that at this stage MacArthur and Americans became a popular symbol of resolution and victory (regardless of the fact that they, too, had suffered their ignominious defeats) and Churchill and Britain remained the symbols of defeat and bungling.

Letters of the second half of April expressed support for Curtin's attitude towards the Pacific and what was understood at the time by the people as his criticism of Britain. The colonial policy of Britain in Asia over past years was blamed as the cause of collapse of British arms in Asia and the opinion was held that in the weakness of the defences Australians had been "fooled" (not by themselves or by their own leaders) but by Britain. Even while, in making such criticisms, the Australian letter writers asserted their independent Australianism they revealed their lack of it by the implication that Britain had been solely responsible for their loss of security and by their naive belief that if they could "get rid of Churchill and the big money Government" in England Australia would be better.

During May the gradual change towards a brighter outlook continued. Many letters still contained bitter comments about the loss of Malaya and "incompetency of leadership". The condemnation of England was modified, however, by the tributes to English courage paid by returning servicemen of the A.I.F. who had fought alongside them in the Middle East.

"While some letters disclose a feeling of fear and impending disaster," the Censor reported on 25th May, "the majority of those examined

indicate growing confidence in Australia's ability to withstand a Japanese invasion. The effect of American aid is acknowledged by many writers of this type of letter."

During June and July, although letters containing criticism were still numerous, it became noticeable that letter writers were also developing an interest in other topics.

On 6th July the Censor reported: "Numbers of letters are observed which show that more and more people are looking forward to better conditions of living for the masses and demanding some rearrangement of wealth after this war. Many of them point to Russia as the country which is setting the desired standard."

There were signs, too, of a recurrence of the resentment against aliens in Australia because, it was alleged, they enjoyed good conditions at home while Australian men had to go and fight. Australian manufacturers were worried by the fear that while they were turning out war goods, the British factories were, so they alleged, turning out goods in order to capture markets for post-war trade. The Censor noted on 20th July that "the increasing number of appointments of controllers, deputy-controllers and other officials to boards and commissions is being resented by many people, who consider that money is being wasted instead of being spent on 'winning the war'."

There were still many letters "thanking God for America". The Censorship Summary of 20th July said: "A large percentage of letters naturally contain references to American troops in Australia. With the exception of the negro element, whose presence has aroused much resentment in those areas where they are stationed, their behaviour generally is favourably commented upon. Their direct methods and seeming scorn of red tape have impressed Australians. The contraction of supplies available for civilian purposes because of the need to supply Americans with food and clothing is a subject for resentment by a few."

From the censorship summaries and Intelligence reports it would appear that by the end of July, at the very latest, anxiety about the security of Australia had passed. By September any discussion about the war was submerged by hosts of lesser complaints about the effects of the war or deficiencies in the war effort. "The public in their letters complain of many aspects of the war effort in Australia, almost invariably laying the blame on the Government," the Censor reported on 28th September. The examples he gave included complaints of waste, over-staffing of government offices, too much drinking, black markets, graft, mismanagement, and too many boards. Some correspondents complained again of a spirit of indifference and cynicism towards the war. They said that the average person at home was enjoying security of employment and prosperity in business. Some complained that the trade unions were getting it all their own way. Some revealed a hope of a different Australia after the war and expressed themselves in favour of socialism. There was still much admiration of Russia. Servicemen's letters contained praise of the English. Some of the

first enthusiasm for the Americans was beginning to wear off. Towards the end of the year an increasing number of communications indicated that preparations were being made to meet post-war conditions in trade, commerce and industry generally.

Although, as previously indicated, these censorship and Intelligence summaries cannot be regarded as a wholly reliable guide to the state of public opinion, the changes of mood during 1942 which they reflect are clearly enough marked to allow certain conclusions to be drawn. The disposition to blame someone else and some meanness of spirit in doing it cannot be overlooked. There was evidence that many of the Australian letter writers were prone to "squeal" in time of danger. It is impossible, however, to draw any conclusion as to how significant this group of the population was in numbers or in influence.

Finally, it would appear that both the Australian official radio news and the Australian press were distrusted and disbelieved by a large number of Australians. The conclusion was moderately stated by the Censor on 20th July 1942: "That the people are becoming distrustful of official news disseminated by press and radio is illustrated by comment made in their letters. Evidence that they are inclined to believe reports issued by the Axis propagandists in preference to that of their own is also seen."

APPENDIX 8

MACHINERY FOR THE COORDINATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN AND UNITED STATES FORCES IN THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC AREA

WHEN the American forces arrived an Administrative Planning Committee was set up; this gradually gave way to more permanent arrangements in April 1942.[1] It had directed American requests to the appropriate departments and tried to make the best use of the administrative machinery available. Sub-committees were set up for Works, Movement, Quartering, Hospitals, and Services Supply. Its Priorities Sub-Committee became a direct sub-committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and, ultimately, the Works Priorities Sub-Committee mentioned below.

The Works Priorities Sub-Committee was set up in March 1942 to consider projected works (both Australian and American) as well as State and non-government works submitted to it, to make recommendations to the Defence Committee about priorities to be allotted, to determine whether a body other than the Allied Works Council might carry out the work, and if so to indicate which, and to furnish certificates about the availability of manpower if the work was to be carried out by the Allied Works Council. Under a chairman, initially a Minister, and from April 1942 a representative of the Chief of the General Staff, the committee consisted of representatives of the three Chiefs of Staff, of the Department of Supply and Development (later Supply and Shipping), the Director-General of Munitions, the Director-General of Allied Works, four representatives of the United States forces, two of the Department of Aircraft Production and one from the Director-General of Manpower. From August 1943 the committee was joined by a representative of the Department of War Organisation of Industry and from February 1944 of the United States Fifth Air Force, and the Chief Engineer, United States Army Services of Supply. From May 1944 it was joined by representatives of the Department of Air, War Housing (Labour and National Service) and Post-War Reconstruction and finally in March 1945 by a representative of the Royal Navy forces based in Australia.

For works of £5,000 or over the American authorities were to advise the Australian service concerned of works required, including preliminary plans and estimates. The works would be submitted by the American authorities to the Works Priorities Sub-Committee and meantime the appropriate Australian service examined the proposals with a view to seeking financial approval. Meantime a requisition and constructional data would be sent to the Allied Works Council, the organisation set up to carry out construction. If, when the Defence Committee's decision on priorities was sent to the Allied Works Council, that council had not received ministerial approval from the service concerned the matter should

[1] See Chapter 4.

be referred to the service immediately and they should ensure immediate action, by the senior officer of the service if the Minister were not available. Construction data was the responsibility of the American authorities and any substantial changes during construction required the approval of the service or Minister. Where variation of estimates of cost became necessary the council must inform the American authorities and the relevant service, the latter being responsible for reconciling financial approval and ultimate cost. The Director-General exercised a general oversight of American works to ensure no material departure from existing American standards involving additional expenditure without the approval of the service or Minister. Departments should consider the availability of similar Australian accommodation when submitting a project to the Minister. A certificate concerning manpower available for the project must be submitted when the project was placed before the Defence Committee.

Details supplied by the Americans enabled a department to coordinate the demands with Australian requirements and to see whether any suitable existing Australian facilities were available. Some difficulty occurred in arranging for the provision by the Americans of the fullest information about their proposed works but in exchanges between Curtin and MacArthur the latter undertook to issue an instruction that in matters requiring financial authority officers submitting proposals were to view Australian service departments "in the same relative position as the War Department in Washington" and that since Ministers had to approve funds they were "entitled to the fullest information and this should be furnished with the original American submission".

American projects under £5,000 might be placed direct with the local representative of the Allied Works Council but each month a schedule of such requests went to the Works Priorities Sub-Committee. In turn the projects went to the service concerned in order to acquire approval of funds.

The Defence Committee was the authority to review munitions programmes and to recommend production rates, priorities and assignments, assisted by the Services Equipment Sub-Committee (to review services programmes and recommend production rates), the Australian Assignments Committee[2] (to recommend assignments as between Australian services, United States forces and the United Kingdom government), and the Small Marine Craft Sub-Committee[3] (to recommend design production rates

[2] This committee was set up in September 1942 by the War Cabinet to receive and consider bids for and recommend to the Defence Committee the assignment of Australian production of army weapons and ammunition. The army provided the chairman, and the committee consisted of one other representative of the Army, two representatives each of Navy, Air and Munitions, one representative of the United Kingdom and one United States forces liaison officer.
Requirements for all theatres outside the South-West Pacific Area including New Zealand were tabled in London and bids in respect of these were made by the United Kingdom representative on the committee. The New Zealand Government had been invited to appoint a separate representative but elected not to do so, leaving its interests to be cared for as part of the United Kingdom bids.

[3] This committee, associated with the Department of Defence, was established in May 1943 by that Minister to consider the small craft requirements of the Australian and United States services and of the Central Cargo Control Committee (of the Department of Supply and Shipping). The chairman was the Third Naval Member and the committee consisted of representatives of the Navy, Army, United States Army Services of Supply, the Shipbuilding Board and the Central Cargo Control Committee.

and assignments of all small marine craft). Programmes for production of munitions for the United States forces were recommended by the Commander-in-Chief S.W.P.A., coordinated with Australian programmes by the Defence Committee and approved by the War Cabinet. United States forces' requirements were placed through the appropriate Australian service departments and not directly with the Department of Munitions. Orders to that department were transmitted by the Defence Committee which indicated the priorities to be given to each item. In any disagreement over priorities the dispute was settled by the War Cabinet. A United States officer was attached to the Australian Assignments Committee and to the Small Marine Craft Sub-Committee, and a United States representative attended meetings of the Defence Committee when allocations were being considered.

For supplies other than munitions the Allied Supply Council, set up in May 1942, was to receive information on the Commonwealth's productive capacity and the needs of the forces in Australia; to ascertain the minimum essential requirements for maintenance of the civilian population; to advise about modifications or revisions in specifications or estimates of requirements whenever supply or production conditions rendered that necessary.[4]

This was the coordinating, planning and advisory body. As the executive body of the Allied Supply Council an Allied Supply Standing Committee was also set up with representatives of the Departments of Aircraft Production, Munitions, Supply and Shipping, War Organisation of Industry, Treasury and the Division of Import Procurement, plus a representative of the Commander-in-Chief and of the Allied Supply Council and United States Lend-Lease Mission. Members of the council were *ex-officio* members of the committee and a representative of the New Zealand Government attended meetings of the council and of the Standing Committee.

In April 1942 an Australian Food Council was set up associated with the Department of Commerce and Agriculture to advise the Government on all major food matters, to ensure that food requirements of the fighting forces in the South-West Pacific Area and essential food needs of the civilian population were met, and to cater for overseas Allied requirements.[5]

Until March 1943 the United States forces were provisioned by the Australian Army, but thereafter War Cabinet directed that they should send their requirements to the Australian Food Council, simultaneously advising the Australian Army. After allocation made by the council the United States Army was to receive, store and distribute within its own agencies.

In May 1943 the Australian Food Council was replaced by the Commonwealth Food Control under a Controller-General of Food appointed

[4] Under a Minister as chairman members consisted of a representative of the Commander-in-Chief United States Army, and of the Ministers for Munitions, Trade and Customs and War Organisation of Industry.

[5] The chairman was the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture and the council consisted of one representative each of the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture, Supply, War Organisation of Industry, Health, Army, Navy and Air, C.S.I.R., Manpower Directorate, Prices Commission, Rationing Commission, British Food Mission, United States forces and an executive officer.

at the end of June 1943. Associated with him were District Food Purchasing Committees appointed in August in each State and consisting of a Deputy-Director of Service Foodstuffs, representatives of the services, including the Allied services, and a representative of the Department of Commerce and Agriculture.

Certain miscellaneous items which did not come under the four main groups should be mentioned. General Headquarters S.W.P.A. established Communications Committees on which Australian services were represented. One of the most important, "Committee H", dealt with long-line wire channels. To ensure that this did not encroach on Australian administrative machinery Curtin conferred with MacArthur and was informed that the committee would advise on operational requirements but that any proposals for new facilities or new construction projects would be submitted through the usual channels to the Commonwealth Government. By arrangement the proposals were submitted through the Postmaster-General's Department. The Australian body, the Defence Communications Committee, reported on communications matters to the Defence Committee and arrangements were made for an officer of G.H.Q. to be available at any meetings of this committee.

The United States Air Force dealt with the Department of Aircraft Production for aircraft repairs and overhaul, and all United States authorities with the Central Hirings Committee for accommodation such as offices, etc.

Machinery for financial approval for works, supplies and services from Australian sources was provided by requisitions being handled by the various Australian departments under the general coordination of the Treasury.

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